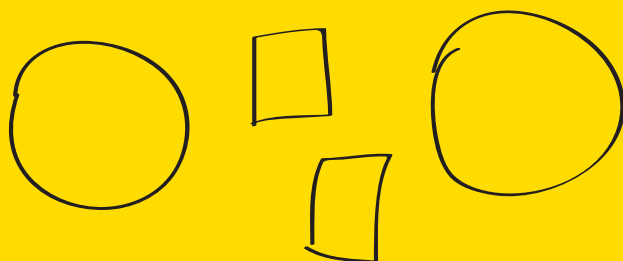


communication design and *the other*:  
investigating the intersubjective in practice



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communication design and *the other*:  
investigating the intersubjective in practice

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Doctor of Philosophy

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**Declaration**

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Neal Haslem  
28 March 2011



## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the intersubjective aspects of communication design practice through a focus on *the other*, and the roles that *the other* takes in practice. It does so in order to better understand the practice of communication design as practiced on a day-to-day basis.

Communication design, as a practice, and a field, extends out of graphic design. This extension is due to a change in priorities; from privileging the graphic and artefactual aspects of practice, to prioritising the consideration of the broader agency of design within a specific context.

This research has been accomplished through a practice-led methodology. Communication design projects form the methods of, and the foundation for, the investigation. Seven individual research projects have been designed and carried out. These projects have each incorporated members of the different participants of communication design practice; new and existing clients, student designers and established practicing designers. This has allowed the research to investigate its concerns from a range of roles and viewpoints, incorporating different perspectives into its observations and understandings.

This research extends the work of Donald Schön and his investigation into *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). It achieves this through a consideration for the roles of *the other* in professional practice. In order to articulate this move extensive reference is made to the thinking of the twentieth century philosophers Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas.

This research has found that *the other* plays critical roles in the practice of communication design. These roles are ones of providing provocative disjunction. Provocative disjunction, as understood by this research, contributes directly to the generative action communication design offers artefacts, clients and designers.

The observations and understandings of this practice-led research have enabled extensive insights into the practice of communication design. These insights contribute significantly to the broader communication design discourse in professional practice, education and research.

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*This research is dedicated to the memory of Dean de Vries (1963 ~ 2010), a great friend, sorely missed. Dean taught me a lot about design, and life.*

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CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION





## PREFACE

This research project investigates communication design as practiced, from the perspective of a communication design practitioner. The research method used is that of practice-led research. As Professor Christopher Frayling states ‘the practice-based doctorate advances knowledge partly by means of practice’ (1997, p. 18).

This doctoral project has used a practice-led research methodology to investigate the intersubjective aspects of practice, and to understand how such aspects are activated by, and contribute to, the activity of communication design. Though the intersubjective is frequently hidden, assumed or implicit within practice, this research demonstrates that it performs a critical generative role in the activity of design.

Using the term *the other* as a focal point this research has investigated the intersubjective in a manner sensitive to its qualities; revealing its activating conditions and agency in order to recognise, consider and acknowledge it without attempting to catalogue, control or render it fully known and thereby obscuring the very qualities the research aims to elucidate.

This first chapter introduces the research, starting with my motivations in undertaking the research. I then discuss the research questions and aims followed by an explanation of the framing concepts that underpin the research concerns. The research methods are then described and a research matrix is provided to guide the reader through each project and chapter. This is followed by a brief introduction to each of the seven individual research projects. The ethics approval process is then outlined followed by an overview of the complete exegesis.

## RESEARCH MOTIVATIONS

The key motivations behind the research can best be illustrated by relating two precursor events that each raised fundamental questions regarding my practice and my understanding of practice.

The first of these events took place during the design process for a plastic manufacturing company's website. I art directed a photographic shoot, discussed the site structure and designed a mockup for presentation. As I began the presentation of the mock-up, I was hoping that the company personnel would like my design and sign it off. However the managing director made no comment on the design but immediately questioned the way it represented the company structure. He felt that the design emphasised the activities of the company incorrectly. His criticism led to a discussion about the perception of the company in the marketplace, and its self-perception. My site design became largely irrelevant during this fundamental and far-reaching discussion about the future direction of the company. My reflection upon this event prompted two questions:

- *What affects did my work achieve other than the instrumental website design?*
- *How did I gain the agency to achieve those affects?*

The second event occurred in 2007 while I was a lecturer in visual communication at the University of Tasmania. I was organising a design research symposium and a student was assigned to design an identity and communication system for this symposium. The symposium was a project for which I had high hopes; it was not just an exercise for me. During my initial briefing meeting with the student the symposium started to become more than just an idea and a couple of emails. When I saw the student's first layout I knew that it was not appropriate to what I wanted and gave her feedback and further direction. Her next iteration was more appropriate and I also found that my idea of the symposium started to develop in combination with her proposal for its visual identity. I had never before been *designed for* and the experience called into question some of my established understandings about communication design:

- *Where did the final concept for the symposium come from and how was it generated?*
- *What did this event indicate about the agency of the designer?*



## RESEARCH AIMS

These two precursor events, and the questions they prompted, led to my research proposal and from there to my research question:

- *What roles does the other have in communication design practice and what might recognition of these roles mean for communication design practice, education and research?*

There are aspects of the activity of communication design, and what that activity achieves, that are clearly understood, such as the communication of information, the composition of image and type and the targeting of particular audiences. However, this research aims to better understand what communication design achieves beyond its instrumental ‘communicating’ activity. Although the intersubjective aspects of communication design often remain obscure and difficult to discuss I wanted to better understand what communication designers achieved when they worked with and for people and how they achieved what they did with those people. In order to investigate these intersubjective aspects of practice I have used the term *the other* as a provocation; *the other* situated this research beyond the instrumentalist concerns of communication design. Further to this, the research does not aim to generate a definitive universal description of ‘what all communication designer’s do when they do design’. Rather, it is an exploration of the particulars of practice with the intention of enhancing my work as design practitioner, educator and researcher, as well as contributing to communication design discourse.

Aspects of the roles of *the other* are already addressed within contemporary design practice and discourse. These aspects tend to focus, in an instrumental fashion, on the participants (target audiences, users, client groups) affected by or during the process of design. Examples include the practices of participatory design and co-creation (Sanders & Stappers 2008), service design (Heapy & Parker 2006), social design (UNESCO 2011) and other participant, user and audience-centred approaches to design practice. My research contributes to the above discourse but with a different focus. The term *the other* is used to shift the focus from the instrumental and instead investigate the intersubjective aspects of practice; between communication designer and *the other*. Rather than, for example, designing with a user *in mind*, or a user *in control*, this research investigates the activating and generative nature of *the other* in the practice of design. This distinction parallels that between a Cartesian subject-centred ontology, in which *the other* becomes an object upon which one has agency and can act, and its critique by the French/Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in which *the other* brings us to being and, in so doing, brings us to practice (Levinas 1990 [1963], p. 293).

Although this research references theoretical understandings of design, both philosophical and practice-orientated, it does not extend from a theoretical foundation.

Instead, theory has been applied in order to articulate the concerns of the research, situate the practice-led understandings extending from the research and to aid in the articulation of those understandings. It is hoped that the understandings about the intersubjective aspects of practice arising from this research will provide a thought provoking, useful and stimulating addition to communication design discourse. A consideration for the role of *the other* in practice offers an important and significant benefit to the development of communication design discourse for all levels of communication design practitioners as well as other participants in the design process.

## FRAMING CONCEPTS

Cultural critic Raymond Williams notes that words are not fixed; rather, he says, ‘meanings are offered, felt for, tested, confirmed, asserted, qualified, changed’ (Williams 1988, p. 12). His book *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* demonstrates how words reflect and affect society and change over time in a multi-layered and complex web of interconnected meaning and use. In order to clarify the concepts employed in this exegesis it is important to discuss the words that have been used to name those concepts.

Several words and concepts are ‘key’ to this research. This section singles out three particularly important and difficult terms—*the other*, *phenomenology*, and *intersubjective*—and clarifies the sense in which they are used and why they are important. Alternative uses of the terms are discussed in order to help define the particular usage within this research.

~

### *the other*

In order to investigate the intersubjective aspects of day-to-day communication design practice, I chose the term *the other* as a provocation, and as a means for me to problematise assumptions that might be made about day-to-day communication design practice. I have used the term *the other* to focus on aspects of communication design beyond the designer and the artefact. One of the main understandings this research has reached is that *the other* and *otherness* are operational and generative in the activity of communication design as I practice and understand it.

The term *the other* is a difficult and contested term. A major difficulty with the use of *the other* is that it is overwhelmingly understood to refer to an excluded other (Tynan 2009). Used in this way *the other* is framed as *the other* that is feared, incomprehensible and inferior to oneself and one’s community.

It can be argued that Western Enlightenment philosophy has supported this exclusionary sense of *the other*. René Descartes, the seventeenth century French philosopher, developed his philosophy from a principle of radical doubt. For Descartes the only certainty was ‘I exist,’ expressed in his famous statement ‘I think therefore I am’; *cogito ergo sum*. Cartesian rationalism became the dominant paradigm for Western philosophical thought: The eighteenth century German philosopher Georg Hegel stated in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ‘[self-consciousness] must proceed to supersede the *other* independent being in order thereby to become certain of *itself* as the essential being’ (1977 [1807], p.111).

From philosophy it extended into science and the humanities, which both embraced a *subject—object* dualism in which *res cogitans*, the ‘thinking thing’ (Descartes’ reasoning individual) objectified the world around the knowing, thinking subject. The connection between this radical individualism and the exclusionary *other* is clear—that which is not of the self is *the other* and becomes an object *in relation to* an individual’s Cartesian certainty.

This exclusionary sense of *self—other* is the sense that Edward Said critiqued in his seminal book *Orientalism* (2003 [1978]). Said revealed the discourse through which Western imperial nations define as *other* the non-Western people of the world, allowing the West to identify, define, isolate, and control those ‘others’:

*The Orientalist ... makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West* (Said 2003 [1978], p. 20).

This strategy of ‘*othering*’ can be applied to any group that can be identified—indigenous peoples; political minorities; sexual orientations; socio-economic groups; or various mental or physical categories. Categorising as *other* can be used to identify, isolate and objectify virtually any group. A group of *others* can then be controlled through strategies of xenophobia, stereotyping and marginalisation. These are violent strategies; they enable, promote and perpetuate violence against *the other*.

Some strategies that aim to ameliorate this violence towards *the other* do so through denying the existence of *the other* and reframing *the other* as *the same*. These strategies aim to remove the violence of *othering* by downplaying difference. They are based on the assumption that everyone, regardless of ethnicity, eccentricity or individuality is fundamentally the same. These strategies aim to remove *the other*.

Some discuss *othering* as a universal human inclination; part of the process of a social group’s or a nation’s self-identification. Stuart Hall, the British cultural critic states

*We know what it is to be “British”, not only because of certain national characteristics, but also because we can mark its “difference” from its “others” — “Britishness” is not-French, not-American, not-German, not-Pakistani, not-Jamaican and so on* (Hall 1997, p. 234).

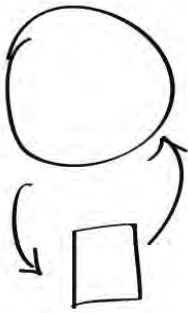
In this analysis a nation defines the outsider as *other* in order to create a cohesive sense of national identity—categorising as *other* gives rise to the *us* and *them*. Arguments exist about whether this use of *the other* is a conscious use by structures of power to manufacture an artificial national identity or whether it is an unconscious human ‘tribal’ tendency.

Stuart Hall's short text *Why does 'difference' matter?* (1997, p. 234) provides an overview of four theoretical accounts of otherness which I paraphrase below:

1. Linguistics (Ferdinand de Saussure)—meaning is relational/binary opposites/we know white because we know black.
2. Dialogic linguistics (Mikhail Bakhtin)—meaning constructed in dialogue with the 'other'/meaning doesn't belong to one speaker.
3. Categorisation (Claude Levi-Strauss and Emile Durkheim)—binary oppositions create clear difference/marking difference enables symbolic order.
4. Psychoanalytic (Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan)—*the other* fundamental to the self/reflection from outside allows the self to come into being.

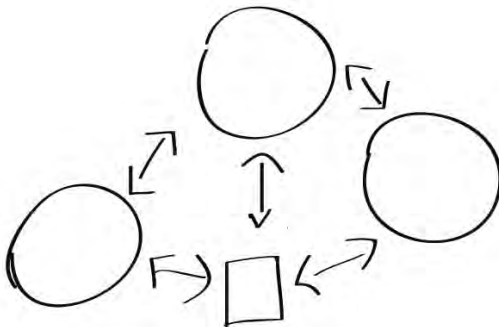
Hall's four theoretical accounts of 'difference' suggested to me how I could split *the other* up into three different types of activating *otherness* in the context of communication design:

1. The first other: *the other* as the design artefact externalised and materialised by designers in order to refine (and create) their knowledge (*figure 1.1*).



*figure 1.1* The 'first' other.

2. The second other: *the other* as other involved participants, enabling dialogic 'meaning discovery' and artefact refinement during the design activity (*figure 1.2*).



*figure 1.2* The 'second' other.

3. The third other: *the other* as that which is other—activated and revealed during the intersubjective action of design. *The other* of the designer provokes and enables the client's access to that which is other within his or her own self. *The other* of the client provokes and enables the *designer's* access to that which is other within his or her own self (figure 1.3).

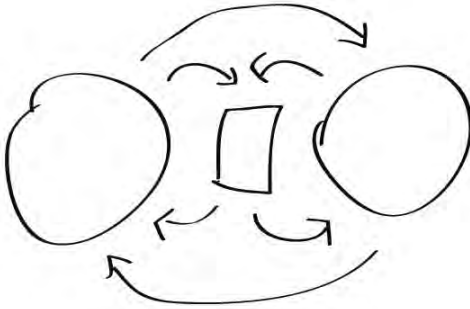


figure 1.3 The 'third' other.

*The other* is a powerful concept. That which is *other* is not understood, it is foreign, alien, difficult, uncertain and inaccessible. *The other* makes the *self* uncomfortable. It questions habitualised practice and accepted knowledge. Contemporary American philosopher Todd May argues in his book *Reconsidering Difference* that the political and social turmoil of the twentieth century, and the violence against *otherness* that was part of this turmoil, led to continental philosophy's endeavours to valorise difference rather than demonise or remove it (May 1997, p. 128). This positive evaluation of difference suggests that *otherness* is to be valued and protected, as *other*, rather than integrated or excluded. May cites Emmanuel Levinas, a Lithuanian/French philosopher, as one of those who described this sense of *the other*, noting that 'one's relationship with and responsibility to the other have been the centerpiece of Levinas' thought' (May 1997, p. 131).

This research does not focus on ethnic or cultural *otherness*. Rather, it aims to understand in what way *the other* is present and active in day-to-day communication design projects. At first glance *the other* does not appear to be present in these situations; what is *other*, for example about a designer designing a website? Following Levinas I argue that even the most well understood client is, at an intersubjective level, radically *other*. As such they have the capacity to disrupt that designer's subjective reverie and thrust him or her into the social world. It is this sense of *otherness*—as a force of disjunction, confrontation, dialogue, extension and negotiation—that this research embodies in the term *the other*. It is to Levinas' sense of *the other* that this research refers in order to situate *the other* as an essential and generative aspect of communication design practice. I contend that *typical* situations of communication design practice are ideal for studying the role of *the other* in design.

Yet this *other* has been, and remains, largely missing or implicit within design practice and research. When the design theorist Herbert A. Simon attempted to define a ‘science of the artificial’, part of his stated aim is to show ‘that the wonderful is not incomprehensible, to show how it can be comprehended’ (Simon 1996, p. 1). Simon attests that ‘... the designer, is concerned with how things ought to be—how they ought to be in order to attain goals, and to function’ (Simon, p. 4). If design practice is defined as the movement from the actual to the preferred (Simon, p. 111), the implication follows that a design situation is an objective situation, with quantifiable constraints, within which optimised solutions can be located through the actions of an adequately trained and equipped professional. This definition of design sees *the other* as irrelevant, except for the information another party might provide to a designer to help define the design goals. Simon’s definition of design seeks to remove that which is truly *other* through assimilation; to ‘show how it can be comprehended’ is to attempt to remove *otherness* through knowledge. Yet, following Levinas, *otherness* can never be fully comprehended, it is *other* by definition, and defies any ‘science of the artificial’.

The practice of communication design from which this research extends is unlike the practice defined by Simon. It is interested in understanding *the other*, not to comprehend it so that it can be controlled, but to valorise it as uncontrollable and incomprehensible yet critical as a generative aspect of practice. This other might be *the other* in the practitioner, *the other* in the client or anyone participating in the design process.

Viewed in this way, *the other* releases the practitioner from a ‘totalitarian’ project. I use the term ‘totalitarian’ to describe the design practitioner who aims to obtain a comprehension of everything (a totality) from his or her own point of view, and materialise that totality within a design artefact. It is through *the other*, Levinas states, that ‘it becomes possible to sustain a pluralism which is not reduced to a totality’ (Levinas 1990 [1963], p. 295). From this perspective *the other* allows difference to be valued within communication design practice, it problematises knowledge and opens up opportunities for risk, chance and the generative potential of practice.

There is an *other* that is accessed in making / the translation of concept into physical form allows *the other* within *ourselves* to be accessed. When I make an artefact, I am given the opportunity to reflect upon a concrete materialisation of my intent. This exteriorised materialisation of my internal dialogue can allow me to see aspects within my intent that I could not see previously. I might want to change them, remove them or develop them further. In this way I can use the design and production of artefacts as a reflexive tool in order to know myself, and to reveal myself, to myself. As design theorist Cameron Tonkinwise states ‘what is at stake in the making is a knowing’ (Tonkinwise 2008, p. 3). As a communication designer I can use propositional artefacts iteratively to refine the articulation of my intention until I sense that I have produced an artefact that appropriately represents that intention. I might even redefine my

original intention completely through the design and production of a series of propositional artefacts. The ability of artefacts to reveal that which is *other* in the self is discussed within communication design research and practice (Glanville 1999; Tonkinwise 2008), though generally not using the term *the other*.

However, such interaction, between designer and artefact is of a different order to the activation of *the other* that is achieved when working with another person. When I design an artefact for an other in collaboration and discussion with that other, then a different order of *otherness* is activated. When I design with an other I am brought face-to-face with ‘pure alterity’ (Levinas 1999 [1995], p. 24). I am forced to negotiate my way through a situation which engages me with the incommensurable *otherness* that is another human *subject*, rather than an *object*.

In my research have used the term *the other* to isolate and investigate the intersubjective aspects of practice that I hoped to understand. I also use the term *the other* throughout this exegesis to represent these aspects and understandings of practice.

~

## Phenomenology

This research is ‘practice-led’ research (Downton 2003; Frayling 1997) based upon my own practice of communication design, and my reflection upon the practice of that practice. The research draws on this lived experience of practice—peer review and publication play an important role in assuring that the concepts and descriptions developed on the basis of my lived experience resonate with the broad experience of other members of my design research community.

As a practice-led researcher, engaged in reflection upon my own experience of practice, I am informed by concepts and language drawn from phenomenology. However, while phenomenological ideas and concepts have informed the research it is important to note that I do not claim this research as a phenomenological study, or one that aligns to the protocols of phenomenological research. In the paragraphs below I describe how phenomenological ideas have informed this research.

In 1900 the German philosopher Edmund Husserl published the first designated phenomenological work *Logical Investigations*; he later developed his method of ‘transcendental phenomenology’ with the publishing of *Ideas* in 1913 (Beyer 2007). Literally, phenomenology is the study of things as they are in our subjective experience, from the first person point-of-view. As his student Martin Heidegger states, Husserl’s maxim for phenomenology was ‘To the things themselves!’ (Heidegger 2008 [1927-1964], p. 81). One of the main themes of transcendental phenomenology is intersubjectivity, yet Husserl’s interpretation of intersubjectivity remained within the Cartesian tradition of subjective certainty.



Heidegger developed his own definition and use of phenomenology, stating its purpose was to 'let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself' (Heidegger 2008 [1926], p. 81). His statement indicates how phenomenology can avoid the 'covered up', and look beyond the 'semblance' and 'appearance' of things. Phenomenology reflects deeply on phenomena in order to bypass appearance and distortion.

Heidegger situates 'appearances' as 'counterconcepts' to 'phenomena.' He describes how phenomenology makes explicit

*something that does not show itself at first and for the most part, something that is concealed, in contrast to what at first and for the most part does show itself. But at the same time it is something that essentially belongs to what at first and for the most part shows itself, indeed in such a way that it constitutes its meaning and ground.* (Heidegger 2008 [1926], p. 82).

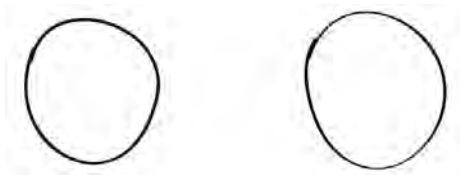
This research investigates the practice of communication design using a practice-led phenomenological research method with the aim of 'uncovering' the mere 'appearance' or 'semblance' to instead look 'to the things themselves.' Once the phenomenal is revealed (through the research projects) those phenomena can start to be interpreted and understood.

Levinas believed the 'intersubjective origin of discourse and fraternity can only be reached by phenomenological description' (Bergo 2008, p. 1). Similarly, it is through a practice-led method, informed by phenomenological concepts that this research project has come to an understanding of the role of the other in communication design.

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### Intersubjective

I use the term intersubjective to denote an aspect of the interpersonal relationship between designer and client. In a diagram I represent the relationship between designer and client as forming an intersubjective 'space' in-between two individual people, or subjects (*figure 1.4*).



**figure 1.4** *The intersubjective space between two subjects; communication designer and client.*

Some definitions describe intersubjectivity as the shared understandings that exist between two or more subjects. In this sense one might use it to describe mutual experiences or consensual agreements. I do not use it in this way as I take it as axiomatic that absolute, shared communication is not possible due to the incommensurability of individual subjects.

Rather, I use intersubjectivity to refer to the conflicted and generative space of ‘give and take’ arising from interpersonal interaction. It is a space of communication but never of absolute or perfect communication. Both parties interpret the intersubjective in different ways yet form it together—it belongs to neither party yet is shared by both. I derive this understanding and use of the term intersubjective on my lived experience of communication design practice.

Intersubjectivity is fundamentally linked to the concept of subjectivity and the dualism *subjective—objective*. These terms are problematic as they presuppose within them the nature of that which they describe. Raymond Williams cautions ‘subjective and objective ... need to be thought through—in the language rather than within any particular school—every time we wish to use them seriously’ (Williams 1988, p. 312). He describes subjective as a particularly difficult word since its meaning has almost reversed over the last three centuries. Its use is currently anchored in German Idealism’s sense of the ‘thinking subject’. The explicit dualism between objective (based on facts) and subjective (based on impressions) became commonplace in the late nineteenth century due largely to the influence of positivist science. Williams distinguishes this from the use of subjectivity as ‘a critique of objectivism, seeing it as a wrong kind of concern with the “external” world to the neglect of the “inner” or “personal” world’ (Williams 1988, p. 312).

This research uses subjectivity (and intersubjectivity) in the sense that as a designer I bring my own—subjective—appraisal to a situation, as does my client. Though it can be argued that this subjectivity is indeed, in some way, always intersubjectivity, this does not deny that I remain separate in my subjective understanding of, and response to, the situation at hand. Yet my client and I *do* interact; we work together and communicate through text, speech and artefacts, in order to design. Although we are separate as individuals we are able to work together in an intersubjective relationship.

In philosophical enquiry intersubjectivity is also a problematic term. Martin Heidegger, the German phenomenologist philosopher, criticises any use of the term intersubjective, noting its origin in the word subjective, a term which carries within it the solipsistic Cartesian concept of the *cogito*; that all certain knowledge extends from the self. Descartes’ concept is criticised by Heidegger as a concept which leads to the split between mind and body, self and others (Heidegger 2008 [1926], p. 66). Heidegger then critiques intersubjectivity as only depicting the peripheral appearance of Dasein’s authenticity, and therefore inauthentic (Gadamer 2000, p. 281).

However, the term intersubjective remains a useful term for this research, and communication design relationship *can be seen* to form an intersubjective space. This research does not set out to prove the existence (or non-existence) of this space, nor make a contribution to metaphysical debate. My reflection on the practice of communication design merely suggests the usefulness of this concept to allow *thinking about* communication design practice and *the other*.

An intersubjective space is created due to the presence of two or more individual subjects. It is available to both subjects but owned by neither subject; it is a shared space. It is often a contested and disjunctive space, for within it multiple subjectivities are brought together.

Communication designers specialise in facilitating the formation, maintenance, and the interpretation of this intersubjective space. There is a case to be made that the act of communication designing, from a designer's point-of-view, demands an extension of the designer's subjectivity into the intersubjective space. Design theorist Cameron Tonkinwise, in a discussion about material practitioners, states:

*It would appear that practitioners have, or at least experience, extended, if not distended, selves, subjectivities that are inherently intersubjective, projected into and through others and other things* (Tonkinwise 2008, p. 8).

In the paper quoted here Tonkinwise is drawing upon Schön (Schön 1983). Schön focuses on the extension of a designer's subjectivity into materiality and the 'back-talk' (Schön 1983, p. 79) that both results in, and is a result of, this extension. My visualisation of Schön's back-talk appears below in figure 1.5, the same diagram with which I visualised the 'first other' (figure 1.1) earlier in this chapter.



**figure 1.5** *The 'intersubjectivity' and 'back-talk' initiated between communication designer and artefact.*

Schön's concept of 'back-talk' has been extremely important for design and design research. It has helped support an argument for the reflexivity and ability to negotiate complexity that practitioners offer, and consequently supports the argument for

practice-based knowledge. Tonkinwise uses Schön's work as a foundation to suggest the extension of subjectivity that is required if a designer listens adequately to the 'backtalk' of the material artefact.

This research supports Schön and Tonkinwise's conceptions, which have lead to important re-visualisations of the nature of the practice of design. However, further to the intersubjectivity enabled through 'back-talk' with material artefacts, this research suggests that it is through the presence of *the other* that communication design enables the formation of an intersubjective space, and furthermore that it is through the intersubjective space that communication design becomes truly generative. The intersubjective 'back-talk' of *the other* challenges both the designer's and the client's subjectivities and calls both of us, and our knowledge, into question (figure 1.6). Within this space our selves and our knowledge become uncertain.

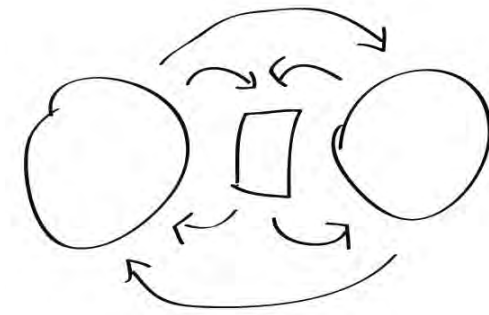


figure 1.6 The intersubjective interaction between communication designer, client and artefact.

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### Communication design

Graphic design, as a design discipline, has undergone many recent changes; it has changed as the society it inhabits has changed, it has changed with the rapid uptake of technology and it has changed due to its own internal development as a practice. As a result there have been calls for a change of name to describe the practice. Suggestions for this change of name have included 'visual communication design' (Frascara 2004) and 'communication design' (ICOGRADA 2007). This research adopts the term *communication design*. The change in name is a relatively recent change, and remains contentious within industry, education and research. Most people participating in this research continue to use the term *graphic design*. In fact, during discussion in relation to this research, I would often use the term *graphic design*; on those occasions it was more important to me that people feel familiar and comfortable with a term than whether I felt it is an accurate description.

However, within this exegesis I use the term communication design. For me, it is a more accurate term for the practice that I undertake, as well as the practice I see emerging in the world around me. The criticism that the term 'graphic' might no longer have enough scope to describe what graphic design practitioners do has emerged recently. Communication design education now instructs students in non-media specific concept generation and user-centred design. It often expects those students to be able to produce time-based, interactive and three-dimensional work. The term 'graphic' does not adequately describe all these qualities. As such, the change of name from graphic design to communication design is both the result of changes to practice while simultaneously being a provocation to enable those changes to take place. With a change of name, from graphic design to communication design, the discipline is now able to accept the many new aspects that have become part of practice over the last twenty years. These changes to practice include the movement into new media and the changes brought about by technology in the areas of print, motion, interactive, and environmental graphics. The change also includes the growing professionalism of a practice claiming recognition for the significance of its work and, at the same time, obliged to take some responsibility for its effect within society.

## METHODS AND PROJECTS

### Practice-led Research

In 1996 Professor Christopher Frayling, the Rector of the Royal College of Art in the United Kingdom, convened a Working Group to ‘raise fundamental questions about the content, form and conduct of doctoral work’ (Frayling 1997). His report made a series of recommendations for research in the fields of creative and performing arts, and design, including reconsideration of what constitutes a doctorate. Frayling’s report provided the legitimacy needed for creative fields to access doctoral-level study. It recognised the specific qualities, and therefore validity, of creative practice-based research and helped establish a standard for scholarly rigour within practice-based research. Briefly, his argument was that although useful research can be done into creative practice using methods from other fields, both quantitative and qualitative, it is important to value and encourage research *through* creative practice:

Frayling’s premise was that creative practitioner-based research has the capacity to produce knowledge that would not, or could not, be produced otherwise. His report helped establish the academic validity of practice-based (or practice-led) research and the need for a specific doctorate that would allow the creative and performing arts to produce practice-led research at doctoral level.

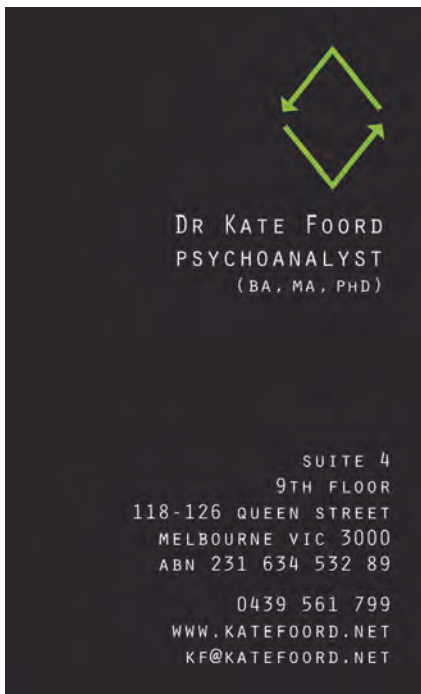
This research has used a practice-led research methodology. The questions this research asks have arisen through reflection upon my own practice and I have used the practice of communication design, and reflection upon that practice, to pursue those questions.

Frayling defined three terms to categorise research in the area of the creative practice—research *for*, *into* and *through* practice (Frayling 1993). Peter Downton, the Australian design researcher and academic, reconsidered Frayling’s three categories of research for application specifically within the field of design in his book *Design Research* (Downton 2003). For Downton *research for design* is research conducted during a design project to support the designing process (p. 17). This includes the finding of information about material and user needs, and directly helps designers to produce design outcomes. Downton defines *research about (or into) design* as research which aims to understand the practice of design more clearly (p. 35); using various phrases such as ‘research into what design should be’ (design methods), ‘research into what designers (actually) do’, ‘teaching and learning design’ and ‘history of design and designed things’. He then discusses *research through design* and makes an argument for design as knowledge; the knowing of the designer, embedded within design outcomes, transformed into transferable knowledge through design research.

My research has entailed each of Downton’s categories. It is *research through design* due to the fact that the practice of communication design, and the artefacts produced during communication design, are integral to the methodological framework of this research. It is *research into design* due to the fact that the concerns of this research lie

in the practice of designing, rather than in the artefacts designed. *Research for design* also forms part of this research in that much of the reading and preparation for each individual design project could be described as *for design*.

Although this doctorate has been completed *through design*, the design artefacts produced during the research do not necessarily embody all the *understandings* that the research has yielded. For example, although the business card produced during the *visual identity project* (figure 1.7) does embody knowledge produced through the design process, considered in isolation it does not allow access to *all* the understandings the *visual identity project* contributed to this research. This artefact cannot be expected to reveal all the understandings generated through the research when reflected upon as an isolated artefact. Although it did embody (some of the) knowledge that stimulated my research, it was my subsequent reflection upon the work of producing it, as well as the discussions it enabled, taken together with the artefact itself, which have led to new understandings.



*figure 1.7* The business card produced during the visual identity project.

Design artefacts embody knowledge differently to written text. Design theorist Cameron Tonkinwise states that unlike the universality of text-based immaterial knowledge, ‘the knowledge of making cannot be extricated from the specificity of its material context’ (Tonkinwise 2008, p. 3). The artefacts made during this research materialise this ‘knowledge of making’. Tonkinwise’s ‘knowledge of making’ can be seen as similar to the type of knowledge that educational theorist Max van Manen terms ‘practical active knowledge’—a ‘form of practical knowledge’ van Manen states, that ‘realizes itself

(becomes real) in the very act of teaching' (van Manen 1995, p. 9). Van Manen is claiming that the 'practical active knowledge' of teachers only becomes revealed and accessible in the act of teaching. By connecting these two theoretical descriptions of implicit, practice-based knowledge it can be seen that van Manen's 'practical knowledge' is given the opportunity, during the activity of communication design, to inhere itself within the design artefact. Although this knowledge cannot be 'extricated from its specificity', it becomes materialised in those artefacts. In this way design artefacts become material repositories, instantiating and communicating the practical 'knowing of making'.

In this way the design artefacts produced for this research embody aspects of knowledge specific to their context, articulating that knowledge and transferring it within their specific situation. They enable, and are enabled through, the practice of design; the 'knowing of making' they materialise activates, and is activated by, the intersubjective aspects of communication design.

Similarly, for the purposes of this research, the 'knowing of making' materialised by the artefacts has been reflected upon by the design researcher, along with their context and the lived experience of their making. Thus, although the concerns of the research are not with the artefacts as such, but with the practice of communication design, the artefacts are important: Not due to their formal qualities, but to the way they instantiate concerns, observations and understandings relevant to this research. Restated in terms of German philosopher Martin Heidegger's dictum that 'Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological' (Heidegger 1962 [1926], p. 32), the concerns of this research are with the ontological rather than the ontic aspects of practice, but it is through reflection into the ontic aspects of practice that this research gains access to the ontological.

Writing remains important to this research as a reflective tool, as well as a tool for dissemination. The writing of this exegetical text has itself been an important reflective tool for the research. During the time span of the research I have written and presented conference and journal papers, through which I have gained feedback that has enabled me to clarify the articulation of the framing and concepts of the research. Other writer's writing about design has been important in framing and initiating the concerns, and correlating the understandings, of the research. Writings from outside the field of design but within the concerns of the research have also been employed. In order to reflect upon my observations and articulate my understandings I have turned to the language of phenomenology, ontology and hermeneutics.

However, when I look beyond design writing to philosophy and apply, for example, Martin Heidegger's language and ideas to the design process, I do so as a communication designer searching for a means of articulation and reflection, not as a philosopher or as a philosophy researcher.



Some research methods that originated in fields other than communication design have been incorporated into the practice-led methodology and undertaken with a communication design sensibility. For example, the *practitioner interviews project* is based on three interviews with fellow communication design practitioners. Interviews and interview analysis are well-established methods of research in the social sciences. However, although the *practitioner interviews project* makes use of an interview structure and conversation approach, it does so as part of a practice-led research project and with a ‘designerly action’ (Cross 2006, p. 9). I designed a series of prompt cards for visual and textual stimulation during the discussion. The prompt cards (figure 1.8) were designed specifically for use in the project and featured keywords synthesised from the concerns of the research. I also asked interviewees to bring example projects in order to allow for an artefact-centred discussion; a form of discussion familiar to all practicing designers. Consequently the practice of communication design informed the way a traditionally sociologically based research method, like the semi-structured interview, was applied.



**figure 1.8** Cards used to prompt the discussion during interviews for the practitioner interview project.

Although the *practitioner interviews project* might be seen to align to the methods of case-study research this is not an accurate understanding of the utilisation or method of this project within the doctorate. The interviews and the design projects discussed during the interviews were used as reflective prompts in order to conduct design conversations about communication design, the experience of design action and the role of *the other*. As such a case-study protocol was not relevant in order to pursue the concerns of this research. The active protocol used throughout this doctoral project is that of practice-led research—that the *practitioner interviews project* incorporated and reflected upon the experiences of other communication design practitioners does not alter this.

## Research Matrix

The research matrix included in the front of this document and shown in *figure 1.9* provides a visualisation of each project and its corresponding chapter in this exegesis.

I have analysed a specific aspect of each project and matched it with a particular chapter within the exegesis. For example, the *visual identity project* is analysed in chapter two, *making: identifying the other*. I have done this in the interests of constructing a clear and sequential argument. Each project is analysed in relation to, and included in, the chapter to which I felt it had the most to offer.

Although the research matrix suggests a strict chronology and logic, it is, in many ways, simply a tool to aid my own articulation of the research, as well as to aid the reader in their navigation of this text and the research as a whole. As might be expected, *the other* in communication design does not necessarily obey logic of this sort when researched.

In the following section I briefly outline the methodological considerations of each of the seven individual research projects. These project descriptions clarify the rationale for the design of each project, including the project participants, the design process and role of the artefacts used and produced during that project.

Each of these projects has been designed in order to pursue the aims of this research within different contexts, with different participants, different points-of-view on practice and different situations. The range of project participants includes students, communication designers, new clients and established clients. The disparate situations and participants allowed me to observe my research concerns through multiple viewpoints and allowed a broad experience of those concerns. The individual research projects build upon one another, reflexively, and iteratively, investigating the research concerns through the specificity of their participants and their context.

The projects include:

- an introductory focusing project (*bus back project*);
- an in-depth analysis and reflection into my lived experience of the intersubjective aspects of practice (*visual identity project*);
- an observation and reflection upon student designer's experience of the intersubjective aspects of practice (*student mirror brief*);
- other practitioner's lived experience of the intersubjective aspects of practice (*practitioner interviews project*);
- my clients' lived experience of the intersubjective aspects of communication design practice (*client discussion project*);
- a visual mapping of the theoretical understandings of intersubjectivity, knowledge and being (*philosophy visualisation project*); and
- diagrammatic visualisations of the intersubjective aspects of practice (*diagramming project*).

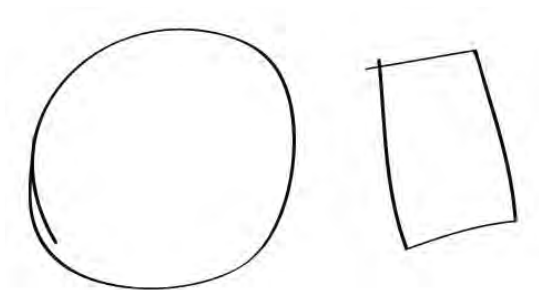
	chapter one: introduction	chapter two making: identifying the other	chapter three knowing: the other reflected	chapter four being: the other in practice	chapter five being-with: the other in dialogue	chapter six conclusion
bus back						
visual identity						
student mirror						
practitioner interviews						
client discussion						
philosophy visualisation						
diagramming						

**figure 1.9** Research matrix demonstrating the logic of the research design and the relationship of each project to each chapter.

## bus back project

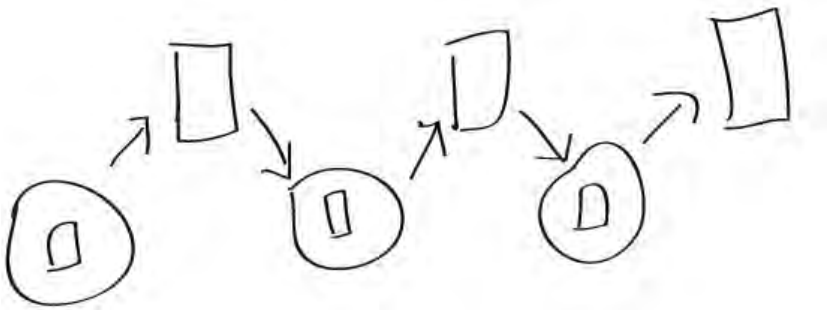
The first project for this research, completed while writing my research proposal was the *bus back project*. The Tasmanian branch of the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) asked local designers to design a bus-back for the public transport system in Hobart, Tasmania. AGDA's brief called for designs that promoted graphic design and, simultaneously, sustainable public transport. The bus back poster that I produced, along with answering AGDA's call, visually articulated a starting point for this research. My bus back design was a provocative statement that probed the intersubjective aspects of communication design I wished to investigate during this research. Designing the bus back necessitated my visual materialisation of the key concerns initiating my research. Once designed and made material the bus-back provided me with a visual foundation statement, a form of visual research question. This project was the point from which I embarked on this doctoral investigation. Consequently it does not have a chapter devoted to its analysis. It is, like the research question itself, a starting point. It did not enact communication design and *the other*, but merely 'spoke' about it.

The *bus back project* was completed without input or discussion from other people; the design process occurred through a series of propositional artefacts and myself, the designer. I visualise the design activity during the *bus back project* in the following way:



**figure 1.10** *The designer (myself) and the artefact (the bus back design).*

Figure 1.10 visualises the designer (the circle) in a relationship with the artefact (the rectangle). As the designer I have a concept that I materialise in a propositional artefact (for example a type layout option). I can then reflect upon that artefact and produce a further propositional artefact, one that incorporates what I have learnt from the first. This iterative process continues until I locate a final outcome.



**figure 1.11** *The designer and the artefact: an iterative process over time involving the designer, their evolving concepts and a sequence of materialised propositional artefacts.*

The *bus back* project can be seen as a dialogue between myself, as designer, and a series of propositional design artefacts (*figure 1.11*). Through a dialogue-like design activity the final artefact is designed iteratively over time. I developed the bus back design alone in my studio, printing versions out and refining my design through reflection upon those versions (*figure 1.12*).



**figure 1.12** *Typeface and composition variations for the bus back project. Different variations of propositional design artefacts are mounted on my studio window in order to assess type legibility and character.*

I sent the final electronic artwork for my bus back design to the AGDA Tasmania representative Kate Owen. A few weeks later she sent me a photo of my design mounted on the back of a Hobart Metro bus (*figure 1.13*).



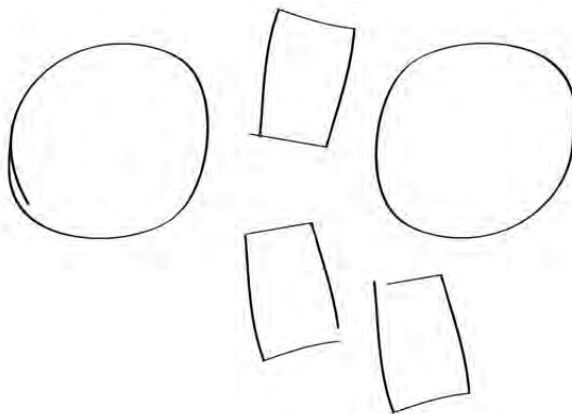
*figure 1.13* The bus back design mounted on a Metro Tasmania bus in May 2008.

That the final artefact included the words ‘you’ and ‘me’ might be seen to indicate that the bus back *enacted* communication design and *the other*. However, while the text that appears on the bus back is *about* communication design and *the other*, the content of the artefact is not indicative of the activity of its production.

**visual identity project**

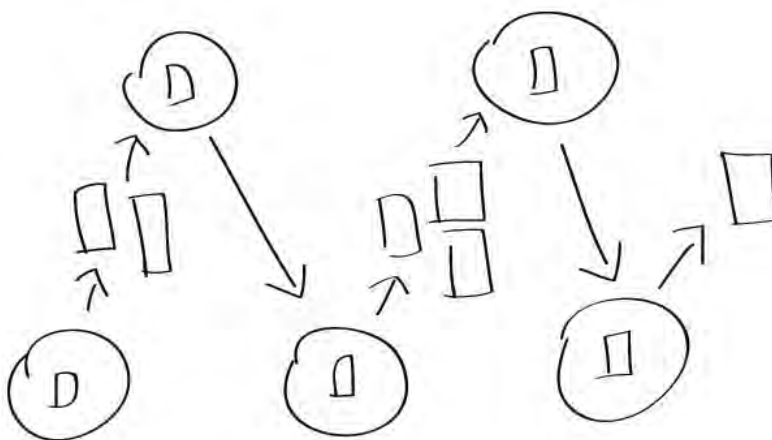
The *visual identity project* extended from the *bus back project* and the research questions, yet unlike the *bus back project* it *enacted* as well as *represented* my research concerns. The *visual identity project* is based around a visual identity designed for a new client. During the design process I kept a detailed reflective journal, adding new entries following each meeting, significant phone call or email. After the visual identity was finished, and the business cards had been delivered, I discussed the project with my client.

The *visual identity project* was completed with input and discussion from my client; it was a design dialogue between a series of propositional artefacts, the designer (myself) and my client. I can visualise the design activity during this project in the following way:



*figure 1.14* The designer (myself), the client and the artefacts.

The two circles in *figure 1.14* represent my client and myself while the rectangles represent artefacts, some of which were pre-existing examples and some of which were produced during our design activity.



*figure 1.15* The designer, the client and the artefacts: an iterative process over time involving the designer and the client, both their evolving concepts and a sequence of materialised propositional artefacts.





*figure 1.16* One of the visual identity design variations presented to my client during the design process.

In *figure 1.15* the lower circle represents the designer (myself) and the upper circle represents my client. The rectangles within each of the circles represent my client and my own concepts for the visual identity, the rectangles outside the circles represent the materialised concepts (propositional artefacts) developing iteratively over time through the design process. *Figure 1.16* shows one of the series of business card design variations produced during the design activity with my client. I refer to these artefact variations as propositional artefacts.

The addition of a client to the design process increases the complexity with which the designer engages. Unlike the *bus back project* the content of the artefacts designed during the *visual identity project* did not speak directly to the concerns of this research, instead they were designed to provide an appropriate visual identity for my client. However the process of design during this project, again in contrast to the *bus back project*, did enact the concerns of this research. The roles of *the other* in the process of communication design were investigated both during and after the design activity. This design project was quite a day-to-day project for a communication designer; however my reflection both throughout the project and retrospectively, was focussed specifically on the roles of *the other* during the process of design.

The range of observations and understandings arising from this project are detailed in the chapter *making: identifying the other*. The next project described is the *student mirror project* during which I introduced *the other* to a student design studio.

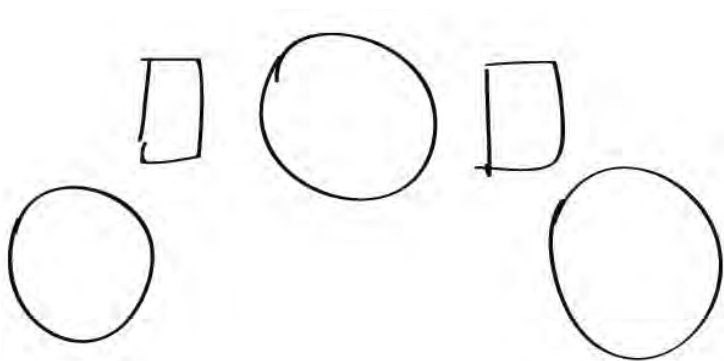


### student mirror project

The *student mirror project* extended from a student brief given as part of my teaching practice for the masters by coursework program at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne in late 2008. Part of my aim with the brief was to introduce students to reflective practice and provide them with the techniques to incorporate it into their own design practice. Simultaneously I used the brief to test the concerns of my research with a group of student designers. This provided me with the opportunity to observe how students reacted when designing an artefact for another person rather than for their lecturer, an imaginary client or themselves.

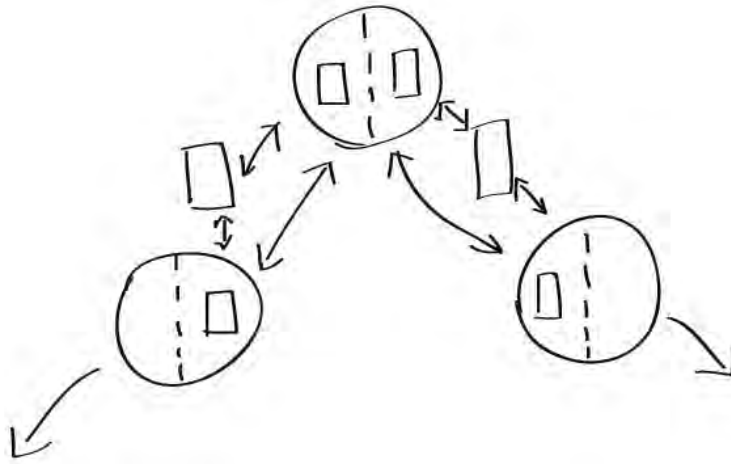
Each student had a dual role, as both designer and client. Every student was asked to design a short animation for another student that promoted that other student's design practice. Simultaneously they were also required to be the client for a different student, who would design a short animation for them. Each student was required to maintain a reflective journal of his or her experience during the brief. Students were later asked to use that reflective journal as the basis for a designed artefact that reflected upon their design process.

I can visualise the design activity carried out during the *student mirror project* in the following way:



**figure 1.17** Three students and the artefacts they produced and used during the student mirror project.

In *figure 1.17* the student in the centre acts as designer to the student on the right and client to the student on the left. The left and right students also act as both designers and clients however this is not visualised in the diagram. Simultaneously to students experiencing the process of *designing for* another student, they also experienced *being designed for* by a different student. The dual roles of designer and client are represented below in *figure 1.18* by dividing the circles in two, on the left is the client role responding to design artefacts, on the right the designer role, designing propositional artefacts for a client:



**figure 1.18** A student designer acting as both designer and client, their concepts for the artefacts and the materialised propositional artefacts they work with and produce.

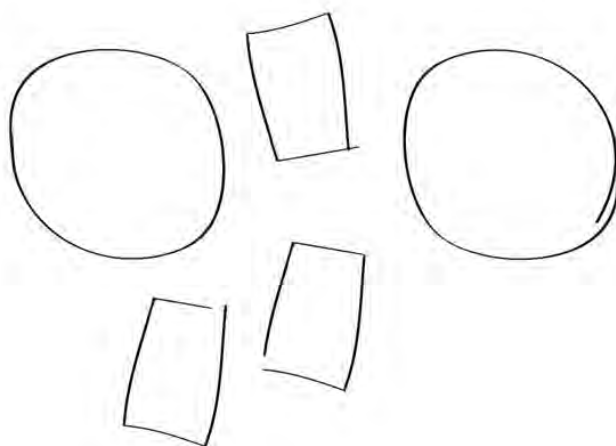
Each student's interaction with their client and designer involved the use of artefacts that evolved iteratively over time. Akin to the *visual identity project* the students produced artefacts about *the other*, with *the other*. At the end of the semester final animations were presented to the whole group. I did not frame the brief to the students as 'with *the other*' or talk directly about the intersubjective aspects of practice; however the project provided me with the opportunity to observe and discuss with novice practitioners the intersubjective aspects of practice.

Overall the students found it very challenging to work closely with another student as their client. I realised that they were not often placed in the position of negotiating other people's viewpoints during their design work. Although difficult for the students I thought it was a valuable experience for them.

The *student mirror project* confirmed to me that the concerns of my research were important ones to consider within design education. It also revealed other observations relevant to the concerns of this research; these, along with other aspects of this project are discussed in the chapter *knowing: the other reflected*.

### practitioner interviews project

The *practitioner interviews project* extended from interviews with three communication design practitioners. I chose mid-career designers currently working as sole practitioners. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Although my interviewees and I were not engaged in a design process the interviews could be visualised in a similar manner as the *visual identity project*:



**figure 1.19** *The design researcher and the designer in a discussion enabled by artefacts; prompt cards and example projects.*

In the case of *figure 1.19* the two circles represent two designers; my interviewee and myself. The artefacts through which we communicate are represented by the rectangular objects, these being the prompt cards and the example projects. I asked designers to bring a current project with them to discuss during the interview. I hoped that the immediacy of their experience with a current project would help my interviewees reflect directly upon their design practice rather than attempt to theorise or rationalise it after the fact. The issues I wanted to discuss were—what they did during the design process; who they worked with; what they achieved through the work they did; what effect their designs had on their clients; and what affect the work had on them as practitioners.

I chose the interview space in order to help support a casual and informal atmosphere (*figure 1.20*). The designers I interviewed were remarkably open, speaking candidly about their experiences working with their clients. It was an exciting and, somewhat unexpectedly, a fulfilling experience for me, leaving me with a strong sense of community of practice with my fellow designers.

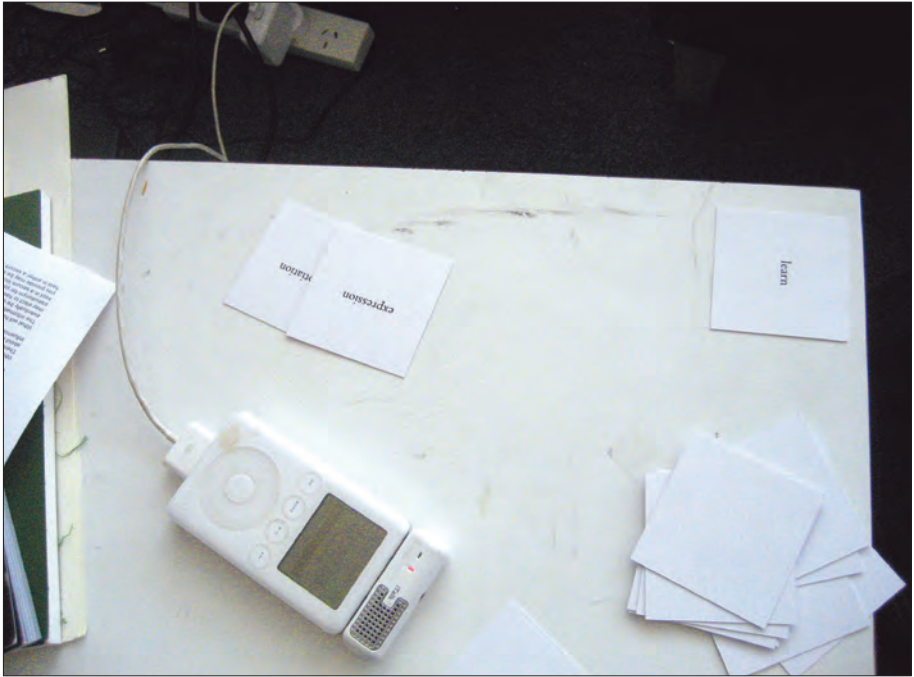


*figure 1.20* Most of the interviews were conducted in my studio, during which interviewees sat in this chair.

Although I informed my interviewees that I was engaged in a research project looking at practice, and the people worked with during practice, I did not expand on that explanation. Similarly to the *student mirror project*, I did not wish to openly discuss the concerns of my research. I aimed to observe how *the other* in communication design arose during the interviews of its own accord.

I used a series of fifteen prompt cards to keep the interview discussion situated in the concerns of the research (*figure 1.21*). Each prompt card featured a single word which interviewees picked randomly during the interview—*risk; voices; society; plan; problem; expression; participate; known; unknown; work; new; teach; learn; negotiation; and future*.

The interviews suggested my research concerns were important in practice, and under-represented in design discourse. None of the designers I interviewed spoke openly about *the other* as an important aspect of their design practice, however the critical role of *the other* was revealed as they discussed their example projects during each interview. The *practitioner interviews project* is analysed in greater detail in the chapter *being: the other in practice*.



*figure 1.21* Prompt cards in use during the second practitioner interview.

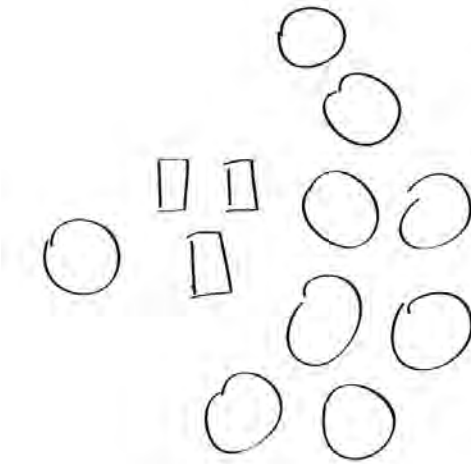
### client discussion project

The *client discussion project* extended from a discussion between myself and members of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis (ACP), one of my long term clients. I exhibited a selection of the work I had completed with them in a gallery, including stationery, journals, a range of flyers and yearly event calendars (*figure 1.22*).

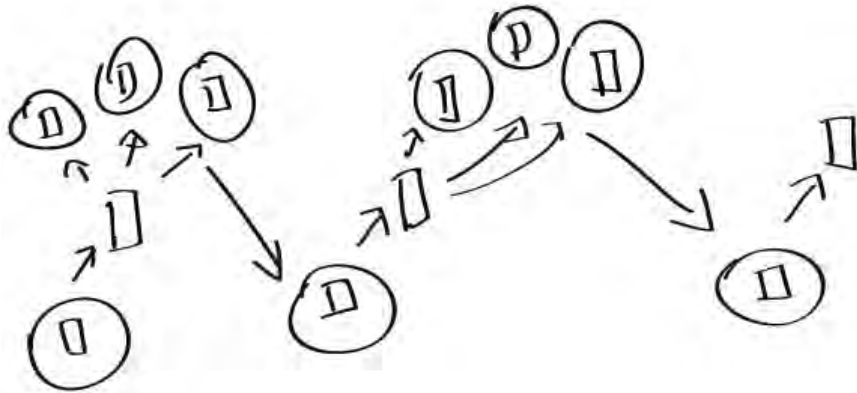


*figure 1.22* Exhibition of design work in front of which the client discussion was staged.

*Figure 1.23* visualises my work with the ACP not the *client discussion project* itself. It represents the designer (myself) as the circle on the left working with various people from the ACP, the circles on the right, using and producing artefacts during that work. The design process, and design relationship, is visualised in *figure 1.24*.



**figure 1.23** *The designer, myself, on the left, the artefacts used and produced during the design activity represented as rectangles, and a group of member of the ACP.*



**figure 1.24** *The designer, the clients and the artefacts: an iterative process over time involving the designer and the client, both their evolving concepts and a sequence of materialised propositional artefacts.*

For the purposes of *figure 1.24* I have reduced the number of individuals representing the client. The designer (myself) has a concept; this becomes a material artefact, which is then responded to by the client. This process is repeated until a final version for the artefact is produced.

I arranged the *client discussion project* with the ACP since the design relationship between them and my business has been relatively long-term and I felt that they were well placed to give me feedback on what our work had accomplished over time as well as comment on their experience working with me. I also felt that, as (Lacanian) analysts, the group might be interested in taking part in a discussion about the intersubjective aspects of practice.

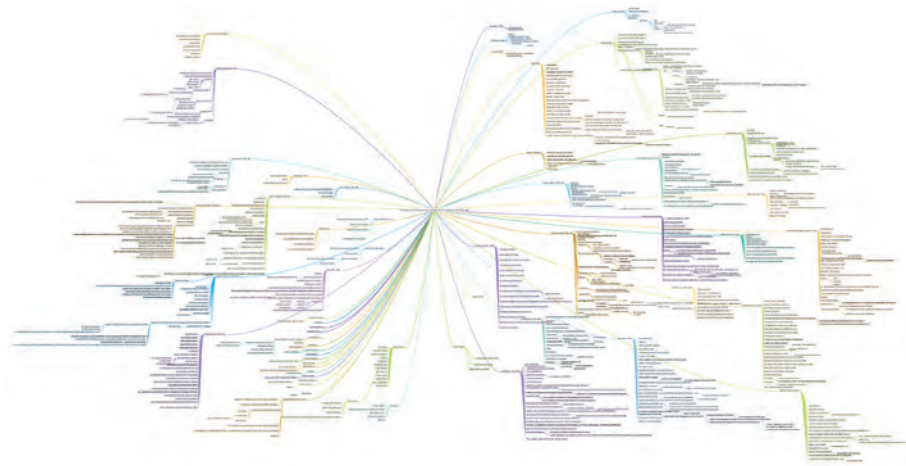
The *client discussion project* supported many of the understandings that had begun to emerge from my research. This project is discussed, and some conclusions made, in the chapter *being-with: the other in dialogue*.



### philosophy visualisation project

The *philosophy visualisation project* began in July 2009 and has continued to develop and to support this research since that time. In June that year I had finished the *student mirror project* and was well underway with the *visual identity project*. I began to articulate some of the early understandings I had developed based on those projects and to further explore where *the other* in communication design might lead. I gave my third presentation at the RMIT Graduate Research Conference and articulated the understandings I was beginning to form. I discussed my identification of three different *others* active during the communication design activity and concluded with my statement that the third *other* (see page 10) was the main focus of my research. Reviewers suggested I would benefit from situating my own articulation and understanding of *the other* in an historical survey of thought on *the other*.

To this end I commenced the *philosophy visualisation project*. This project visually maps key philosophers, who have articulated ideas and theories relevant to my research concerns. While too small to read at this scale *Figure 1.25* shows the extent of the visualisation. I have used this visualisation to follow the correlations between the philosophical arguments and the development of my own research understandings, enabling me to situate and articulate my research with greater clarity.

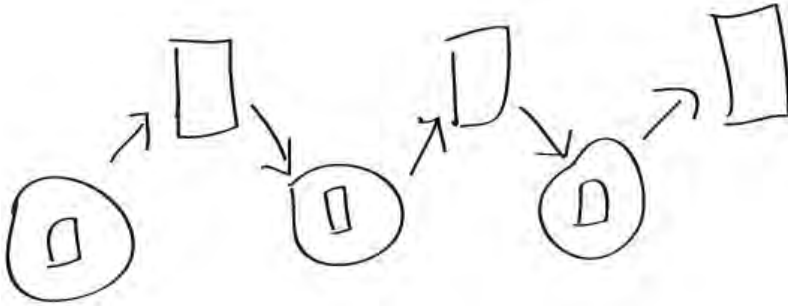


**figure 1.25** The visual mapping produced for the philosophy visualisation project.

I researched and designed the *philosophy visualisation project* independently, without clients or colleagues. In this way the design process is similar to that of the *bus back project* as seen in *figure 1.26*.

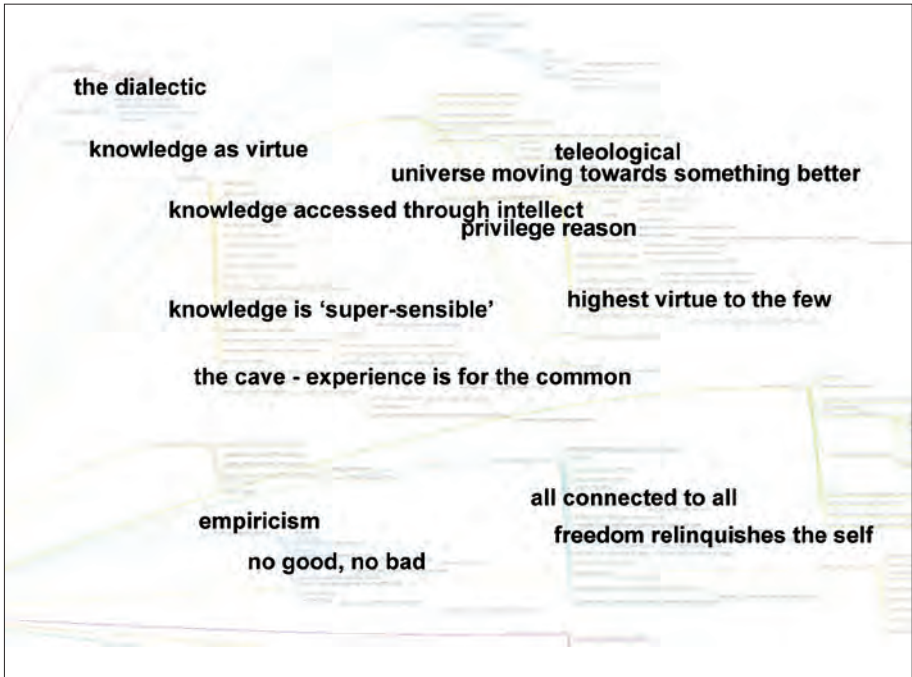
The *philosophy visualisation project* arranges and categorises information and, like the *bus back project*, enables me to reflect on the concerns of the research in the form of an externalised material artefact.





**figure 1.26** *The designer and the artefact: an iterative process over time involving the designer, their evolving concepts and an iterative sequence of artefact versions.*

While producing the visualisation I referred mainly to secondary sources—The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy online (Stanford University 2010); and Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy* (Russell 1996 [1946]). I also referred to a number of primary sources including Martin Heidegger’s *Basic Writings* (Heidegger 2008 [1927-1964]), Mikhail Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin 1981 [1975]) and Jürgen Habermas’ *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984 [1981]). I also attended several short courses at the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy (Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy 2010). I amalgamated the information I had gained from these readings and short courses into a visualisation of key individuals adding brief annotations relating to their contributions to philosophical thought. I composed a visual map according to theme and chronology using a mind-mapping application.



**figure 1.27** *Thematic statements over-laid on a section of the philosophy visualisation project.*

The visualisation allowed me to trace thematic and historical arcs from rationalism to phenomenology to *the other* (figure 1.27). Through this process I was able to define a path through philosophical thought that informed the concerns of my research—*the other*, the subject, difference, intersubjectivity and epistemology. As I developed the visualisation it became clear that these philosophical themes were reflected in the various approaches to design writing, process models and research.

It is important to be clear that I make no claims to be a philosopher, nor a reader of philosophy. I am a communication designer, a reflective practitioner and a post-graduate researcher. I have of course encountered philosophically grounded writers in design including Cameron Tonkinwise, Tony Fry and Clive Dilnot. When I began reading for the *philosophy visualisation project* I realised that the *subject* (as a philosophical question), and therefore *the other*, was a fundamental metaphysical topic, extending through epistemology to ontology. I had begun my research with a desire to better understand ‘what communication designer’s did’. I did not realise I would find myself confronting the fundamental philosophical questions of ‘what constitutes a subject?’, ‘where does knowledge comes from?’ and ‘what is it to be?’. However, it is to these concepts and questions that I was led by the visualisation.

The visualisation is incomplete, sketchy and inconsistent. I make no apologies for this since I view the visualisation as a mnemonic constructed for my own use as a reflective research tool. Although at first glance *the visualisation* might look like one of Edward Tufte’s informative visualisations (Tufte 1990) it is not an attempt to create an authoritative guide or a claim for ‘truth’. I researched the visualisation by searching for the concerns of my research, literally typing *the other* into the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy search engine and following the links. The visualisation is the result of an intentional, focused and subjective search rather than an *objective* overview. As I developed the visualisation I realised that, as well as enabling me to situate my research within established discourse, it enabled me to articulate and focus the concerns of my research.

The research I completed for the visualisation, and the visualisation itself, has introduced me to thinkers like Heidegger, Gadamer and Levinas. I have used it within this exegesis to situate the research’s epistemological and ontological understandings. I also plan to use it to help me disseminate and discuss those understandings.

## diagramming project

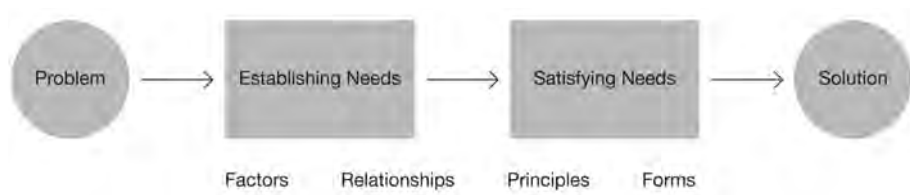
The *diagramming project* began in October 2008 and has continued throughout the research. Diagramming has been important to this research as a reflective sense-making method as well as a method for articulation and reflection. Visualisation and diagramming will be used to help disseminate and articulate the research.

I was influenced in the *diagramming project* by the *Proun* compositions of Soviet Union constructivist artist El Lissitzky. He produced his painted Prouns during the height of the social transformation of the Soviet Union in the early twentieth century. In a 1920 essay Lissitzky wrote

*the artist constructs a new symbol with his brush. This symbol is not a recognizable form of anything in the world—it is a symbol of the new world, which is being built upon and which exists by way of the people* (Druitt 1999, p. 9).

Victor Margolin, in his book *The Struggle for Utopia* states that Lissitzky ‘held the idealist conviction that forms could embody a new consciousness’ (Margolin 1997, p. 10). Lissitzky’s belief that his graphic compositions communicated directly and non-instrumentally has informed my aims in diagramming, and communicating, my understanding of communication design and *the other*.

The *diagramming project* also acts as a response to the use of diagrams to ostensibly provide communication design with guidelines for better design process. These diagrams claim to reduce risk, set expectations and increase reliability, thereby enabling greater efficiency and overall improvements in the design process. The example in figure 1.28 is taken from a collection titled *How do I design?* (Dubberly 2005, p. 6). My *diagramming project* responds to these diagrams somewhat positivistic claims with a series of ambiguous visualisations that aim to investigate *the other* in communication design.



**figure 1.28** *Problem, Solution after JJ Foreman (1967), How do you design?* (Dubberly 2005, p. 6).

The first diagram produced explicitly for this research was made in July 2008 during the New Views 2 symposium (Triggs & Vaughan 2008). During a group discussion I led the production of the following diagram:

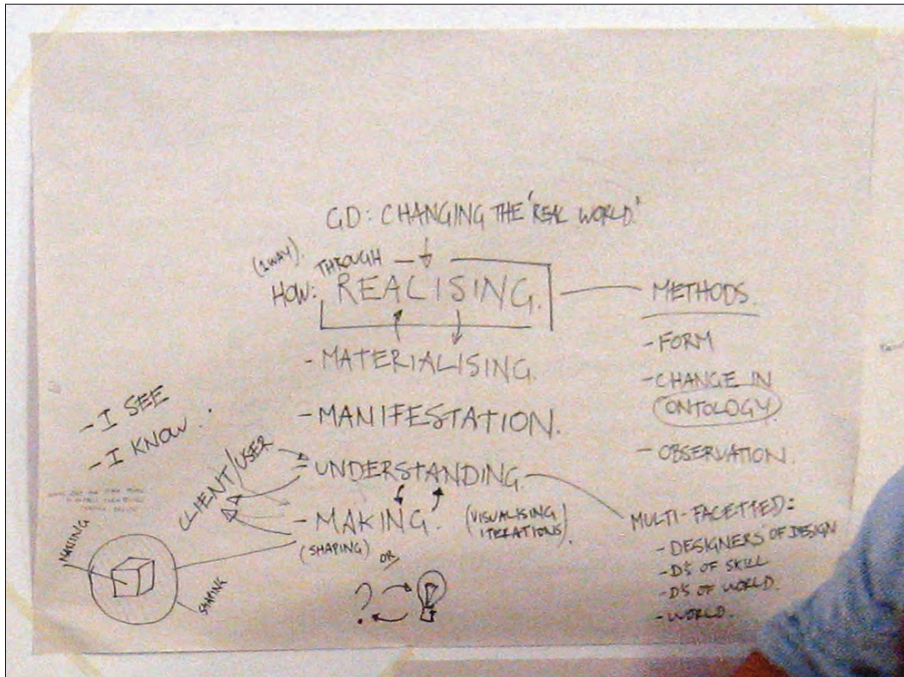


figure 1.29 Diagram produced during the New Views 2 symposium, July 2008.

This diagram shown in Figure 1.29 attempted to visualise an iterative process that produces change through artefacts. The *materialising* of a design artefact leading to a *realising* that leads to further *materialising*. This diagram became a critical moment in my research, articulating and concretising key concerns and understandings. I later designed a series of diagrams (figure 1.30-1.35) developing from the earlier one:

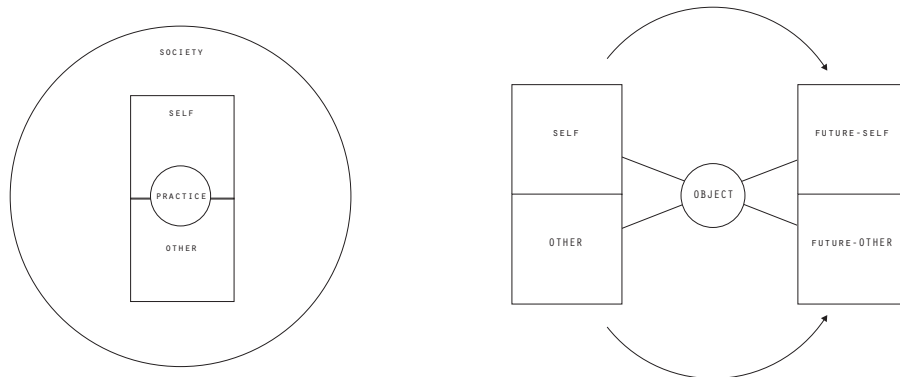


figure 1.30 Diagrams produced in October 2008.

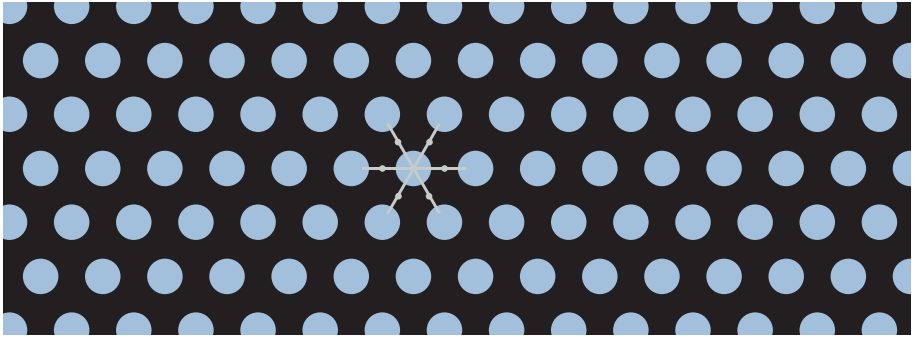


figure 1.31 Diagram produced in May 2009.

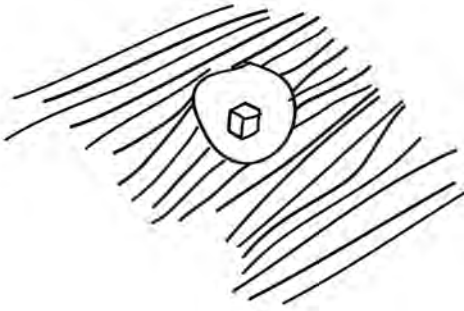


figure 1.32 Diagram produced in September 2009.

I see the *diagramming project* as one of my research methods, allowing me to describe and articulate my research concerns in a way I cannot through text. I made a deliberate attempt not to pre-judge or edit diagrams as I drew them, hoping I could visualise the research's nascent understandings without falling into an obscuring clarity. I did not fully *know* what the diagrams *meant*. As I made the diagrams I tried not to resolve their meaning, fashioning a visual symbolic language.

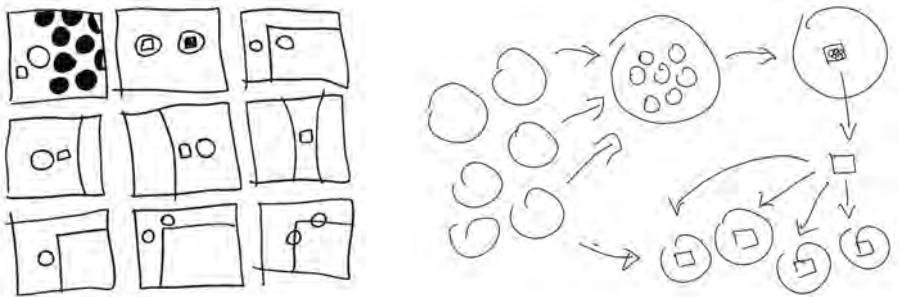
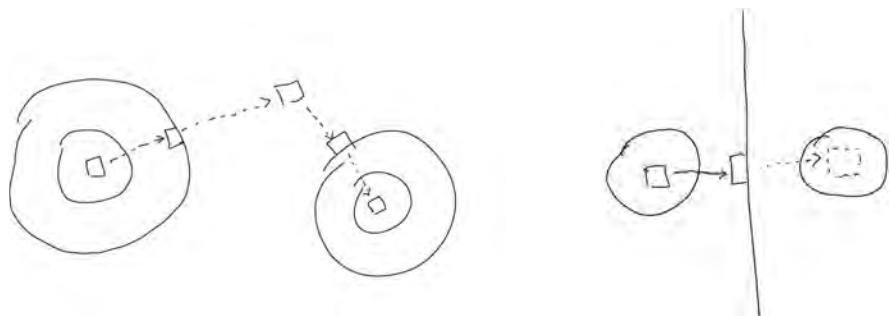
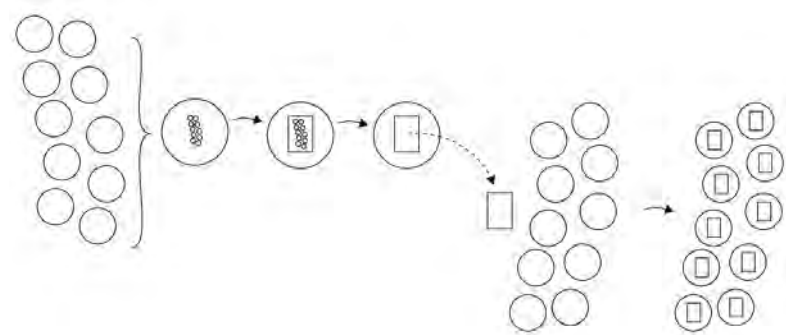


figure 1.33 Diagrams produced in September 2009.

At times these diagrams have helped me to articulate my research, at times they have worked as reflective artefacts enabling me to see the concerns of my research externalised in a different form than writing, allowing me to reflect upon the concerns of my research and develop those concerns.

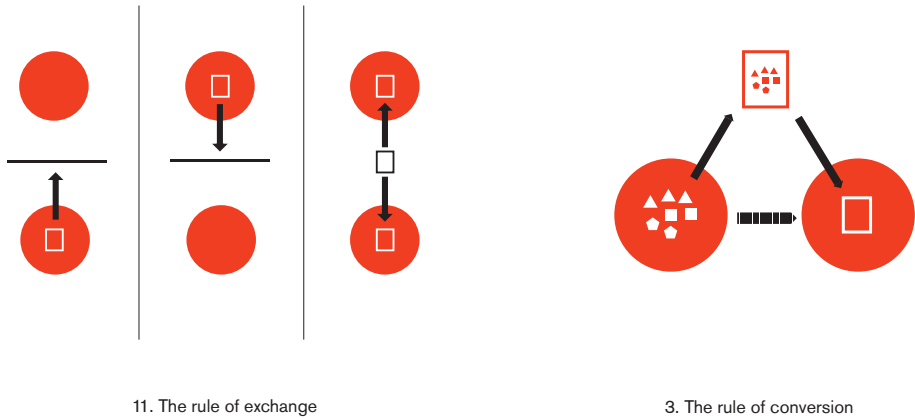


*figure 1.34* Diagrams produced in September 2009.



*figure 1.35* Diagram produced in September 2009.

I have also experimented with adding text to the diagrams (figure 1.36). In September 2009 I wrote a list of ‘rules of communication’; when added to the diagrams the rules suggest a dogmatic ‘manifesto-like’ reading, yet the diagrams themselves remain ambiguous:



*figure 1.36* Diagrams produced in October 2009.

The diagrams aim to communicate in a number of different ways, as:

- playful responses to ‘unambiguous’ design process diagrams;
- reflective tools for my research;
- earnest attempts to articulate and disseminate the research understandings;
- artefacts with which to prompt discussion of the research understandings.

The *diagramming project* is an on-going project. I intend to use the *diagramming project* extensively for the final exhibition and examination of this research project and as part of the strategy for this research’s continued dissemination.

## ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

This research project has worked with both designers and clients. An *Application for ethics approval of research involving human participants* was submitted to the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee on 5 October 2008. My application was approved on 20 February 2009.

*Plain Language Statements* were given to each interview participant. Participants read and signed these statements before each interview commenced. I retained the original and a copy was given to each participant.

Although each interviewee willingly took part in the interview, in the case of the *practitioner interview project* I have changed the names of the designers I interviewed as a consideration towards professional privacy. My participants were remarkably open with me about their relationships with clients and their experiences of their design projects. The projects we discussed possibly remain ongoing. Dissemination of my interviewee's reflections, and my analysis, could impact professionally on those interviews or their clients. For this reason I have changed the names and have omitted possible identifying details from each interview. My interest lies in these practitioners' experience of practice; where it is not necessary for the purposes of this research project to disclose additional details I have refrained from doing so.



## OBSERVATIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS

Throughout this research two projects—the *philosophical visualisation project* and the *diagramming project*—have been fundamental in guiding how I proceeded. Together these have helped inform the research concerns and have supported its articulation. The *philosophical visualisation project* has enabled me to situate this research within an historical and philosophical context, allowing me to comprehend the development of the concept of *the other* philosophically and historically and to situate my research within these contexts. It has also allowed me to see the fundamental role of discussions exploring subjectivity and intersubjectivity and understand how my research, and established communication design research understandings, have developed from these discussions. My research has investigated the paradox of *knowing* yet *not-knowing* in practice, and *not-knowing*'s critical ability to 'let *the other* in to practice', thus enabling the ontologically generative capacity of practice.

The *diagramming project* has allowed me to visualise the concerns of my research in a non-text based manner. The diagrams have helped me focus the concerns of the research as well as articulate those concerns. They have also started to suggest the means by which communication design practice gains its transformational potential. These diagrams continue to play an important part in the research and will take an active role in the dissemination of this research.

The first project, the *bus back project*, outlined the concerns of this research. Its inclusion into the exhibition at the *New Views 2* symposium in London and my participation at that symposium helped confirm to me that this research was investigating a useful and timely aspect of communication design practice.

The *visual identity project* in which I designed a visual identity for a new client through my commercial practice is discussed in the chapter *making: identifying the other*. This project revealed a number of observations—the highly sensitive and somewhat anxious aspects of the designer/client relationship and roles; the difficult and partial communication that occurred during the design process; and the collaborative heuristic nature of that design process. These observations supported and revealed aspects of the critical role *the other* had in this design process.

The *student mirror project*, discussed in the chapter *knowing: the other reflected*, took place with a group of coursework masters students. I wrote a brief that required the students to work with one another in client/designer pairs. Each student simultaneously took the role of client to another student's designer and designer to another student's client. This project revealed the students' lack of experience negotiating with actual people during their design activity. It also revealed the complexity added to the design process when completed with others. This project suggested that inclusion of *the other* into the design process not only increased the complexity of that process but problematised the designer's assumptions, leading to the possibility for the production of new knowledge.

The *practitioner interviews project*, discussed in the chapter *being: the other in practice*, incorporated three interviews with communication designers. These interviews were based around example design projects that each designer brought to the discussion. The observations I made during this project supported those I made of my own practice during the earlier projects—disjunctive communication, heuristic collaboration, knowledge production and the critical role of *the other*. The interviews also suggested that communication design practice has the potential to change ‘what is’ as well as ‘what is known’. In other words they suggested the ontological nature of communication design practice with *the other*.

The *client discussion project*, analysed in the chapter *being-with: the other in dialogue*, gave me the opportunity to test some of the observations and understandings I had developed during this research with a group of long term clients. The *client discussion project* helped me to articulate and consolidate my research understandings. It gave me an opportunity to view these understandings from a different perspective: my clients point-of-view. I came to understand that the core of my research was not the potential for design to effect ontological change but that design practice operated generatively with *the other*. As such the fundamental insights were not that communication design was a practice of defining future *being*, but rather, an ontologically generative practice of *being-with*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MAKING: IDENTIFYING *THE OTHER*





## INTRODUCTION

This chapter *making: identifying the other* examines the *visual identity project* in order to investigate the role of *the other* in the making of communication design artefacts. In particular I focus on the way *the other* is active in, and activated by, the making of material artefacts.

In his much quoted book *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön 1983), Donald Schön points towards some aspects of practice observed during this project. In one of the last sections of his book he states:

*Both client and professional bring to their encounter a body of understanding which they can only very partially communicate to one another and much of which they cannot describe to themselves. Hence the process of communication which is supposed to lead to a fuller grasp of one another's meanings and, on the client's part, to an acceptance of the manifest evidence of the professional's authority can only begin with nonunderstanding and nonacceptance—but with a willing suspension of disbelief* (Schön 1983, p. 296).

Schön's statement correlates with several observations I made during the *visual identity project*—the sensitivity of the designer/client relationship; the difficult partial communication; and the anxiety present in the initial stages of the relationship.

A further observation not included in Schön's description above was the collaborative nature of my communication design work with my client, revealing the critical role of *the other* in the communication design process.

Analysis of these observations lead to a range of propositional understandings, drawn directly from reflection upon the *visual identity project*. These extend and support the proposition of the critical role of *the other* within the activity of communication design suggesting that communication design is more than an instrumentalist activity—that communication design with *the other* is a generative practice; that communication design is activated through communication with *the other*; that artefacts allow communication with *the other*; that artefacts instantiate hermeneutic/heuristic steps; and that communication with *the other* is achieved during communication design.

During the *visual identity project* I kept a detailed reflective journal in which I recorded my observations and immediate impressions and emotions while working on the project. This reflective journal, as a device for phenomenological study, is also an artefact embodying my direct experience while working on this project. In this chapter I both critically reflect on the contents of this journal, and quote from it directly.

Following the printing of Kate's business cards and during the finalisation of her website I invited Kate to discuss and reflect on her experience of the design process. With her permission I recorded our conversation. Within the analysis that follows I quote directly from a transcript of that discussion.

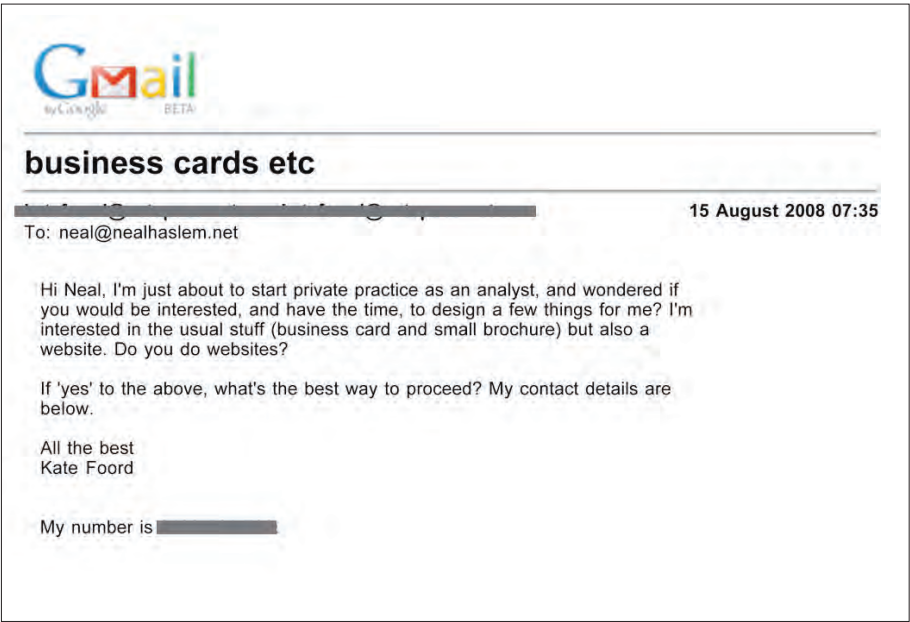
# THE PROJECT

## Positioning Visual identity

The term ‘visual identity’ is commonly used in the communication design industry for any visual system that identifies an entity through the use of a recognisable type treatment, visual emblem or visual style. This visual system usually involves the use of type, colour and symbol to create a composition that becomes an identifying aspect of that entity.

The design of ‘visual identity’ systems became a professional practice in the post-war years when graphic designers such as Paul Rand became famous for designing iconic visual identities for companies such as IBM (1956) and ABC (1962) (Floch 2000 [1995], p. 34). Business became aware that companies with an appropriate and recognisable logo were at an advantage within the market. The design of visual identities came to be an important aspect of the work of graphic design.

In the 1990s logo design and visual identity work became somewhat eclipsed by the more holistic practices of brand development and brand management. Brand management incorporates visual identity as one part within its broader strategy to design, produce and manage the meaning attached to an entity (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009). Brand development and management are more commonly practised by larger commercial and public entities. When designing for smaller scale entities it remains appropriate to use the term ‘visual identity’.



*figure 2.1* Email correspondence sent from Kate Foord to my business email on 15 August 2008.

### First email

In August 2008 Kate Foord emailed me that she was ‘about to start private practice as an analyst’, and asking whether I had the time to ‘design a few things’ (*figure 2.1*). I had met Kate briefly while working on a journal redesign project for a separate client. Kate knew from this earlier meeting that I was a communication designer. She had seen some of my work and had my contact details.

Kate’s email arrived on 15 August 2008, two months after the research proposal for this PhD was accepted. I was in the initial stages of planning the project work through which I would investigate my research questions. Initially I thought I would suggest a different designer to Kate, since I could not afford the time to embark on a new client project. Upon reflection I realised that a discrete design project for a new client would be a useful addition to my research. I realised it offered me an opportunity to record and reflect on the experience of design, from both the designer and the client’s point of view, within a relatively contained design project.

That my new client Kate was an analyst was not something that I saw, at the time, as particularly relevant, although I thought it might mean she would be adept at reflection. The lack of my own perception of the import of this aspect surprises me now; it is clear that many of the observations and understandings that extend from this project do so due to the intersection of psychoanalysis and design. However I wonder whether my openness and lack of deliberate strategy were factors in allowing this project to operate successfully yet with the capacity to yield significant insights. My hopes for Kate’s level of reflexivity were well founded; she contributed extremely thoughtfully during our conversations and consequently to this research as a whole. Her practice as an analyst, particularly an analyst who has worked in publishing, was immensely valuable, though somewhat unquantifiable. My sense however is that it was due as much to Kate as to myself that this project became such a valuable aspect of my research.

After consideration I decided that Kate’s email provided an ideal opportunity, albeit a risky one, to start exploring the concerns of this research. The risk arose from the challenges of my double role as both communication designer offering a service and practice-led researcher. The risky nature of this project resulted in a revealing research project. Detailed journaling of my experience, both at the time of working on Kate’s visual identity, as well as later after interviewing Kate for this research, has provided valuable material. My observations of, and reflection upon, the *visual identity project* relate to the intersubjective aspects of communication design practice—Kate and I, each working with *the other*, in order to create an identity for her new practice as a psychoanalyst.

### First meeting

During my first meeting with Kate she agreed to allow me to incorporate her project into my research. This was a difficult request for me to make during our first meeting. It felt like an intrusion into the commercial working relationship we were just starting to form.



An entry in my reflective journal records how difficult it was for me to break the flow of that first meeting with a question about whether she would agree to her commission becoming part of a research project:

*I felt nervous and uncomfortable [asking the question], it didn't feel like a valid part of our discussion, it felt like an unnecessary inclusion, and I felt a trust we had begun to build up almost slipping away* (N Haslem 2008, journal entry, 22 August).

To some extent my feelings of discomfort can be seen as an inevitable difficulty arising during practice-led research due to the dual role of the researcher as both practitioner and researcher. However more can be learnt from my discomfort than just a reminder of my split role.

### **A critical relationship**

The feelings I had when asking the question demonstrate the sensitive and critical nature of the relationship Kate and I were embarking on during that first meeting. Those feelings indicate the delicate nature of the first 'trust-building' steps initiating a new designer/client relationship. I was not previously conscious of the degree of delicacy these negotiations entail. It was only through reflection on the moment when that delicate process was threatened that this insight into the critical nature of my relationship with my client was revealed. The interruption to habitual practice caused by my dual role of designer/researcher was important in allowing this insight to appear.

I carry out my design practice in a casual, friendly manner and my first meeting with Kate was no exception. Due to this one might assume that the work accomplished during that first meeting is, likewise, friendly and casual. The difficulty I had stepping out of the role of designer and into the role of researcher allowed me to see that the friendliness and casualness conceal an important activity of negotiation, along with a delicate emotional engagement, both of which require a high level of trust.

Kate and I hardly knew one another, yet during that first meeting I had to quickly come to an understanding of what type of business she wished to start. In order to give me that understanding I had to develop and maintain in Kate a trust that I could (with her help) design the artefacts she needed in order to make her new practice a successful reality. For Kate our relationship was charged with the possibilities of her practice's future image and the risk that came with that image. She came to me because she felt I would be able to design communication artefacts that would help her to start her practice. Creating those artefacts required Kate and I to define and concretise many aspects of her future practice. These aspects included the way in which Kate's existing practice would extend into her becoming a practicing psychoanalyst, her self-perception and the market's perception of her. They also involved the relationships between Kate and her teachers and colleagues, and their perception of her in her future role as practising psychoanalyst.

My role had specific requirements that stemmed directly from the context of Kate's identity project. These requirements prompted a series of questions: What would I need in order to do this work with Kate? What did I need from Kate in order to do the work? How would Kate need to relate to me in order to do the work? These aspects needed to be resolved during that first one and a half hour meeting.

Ostensibly a communication designer's work during the first meeting is simply to collect a 'brief' and gain enough information in order to design an appropriate artefact. However the *visual identity project* demonstrated that there were other important aspects to the meeting beyond collecting a brief. Kate and I were engaged in a process of establishing trust and co-determining our professional roles. When Kate asked me to design her visual identity she was also inviting me to participate in making a new reality for herself as a practising psychoanalyst. Rather than handing over information or a list of pre-prepared aims and objectives, Kate and I were embarking together on the process of locating those aims and objectives.

### Design anxiety

Kate had just finished her training as a psychoanalyst. To practise as an analyst was the logical next step, but a new role for her. During that first meeting Kate had to try to articulate the practice she wished to have, which did not yet exist. Her practice would be a new entity in the world. My presence, and the work I committed to do with her, required her to articulate and make decisions about the nature of her new business. This was a highly personal, anxiety-producing act. Kate wanted her new practice to be successful. In some ways the work we did together would become a physical embodiment of her personal project as a practising psychoanalyst. Partly as a result of our work, Kate's new business, and her role as practising psychoanalyst, was created. This situation is fraught with anxiety and uncertainty. When I interviewed Kate she talked about the anxiety she felt embarking on this project:

*For me it's been an anxious making thing to do, I don't know any other analyst who's got a website, and in some ways I'm embarrassed to be doing something like that. Other people haven't done it yet and I'm thinking that maybe there are really good reasons they haven't done it or maybe it's 'tacky'. How can you reduce Lacanian analysis to five pages on a web wall? So I have felt very anxious about it.*  
(Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).

Kate makes her uncertainty clear in the statement above. This was the first time she had started to practise as a psychoanalyst, and she wasn't sure how to go about it. She commented that she was commissioning me to design artefacts for which she can find 'no precedent'. She speaks about those artefacts making a 'place that hasn't been made before'. Communication design's ability to generate the 'place that hasn't been

made before' comes hand-in-hand with the anxieties of working without established precedents. There is a real risk taken when one concretises one's personal ambition in the form of communication design artefacts.

### **Disjunctive communication**

Although one of the perceived aims of communication design as an activity might be said to be that of clear communication, it became obvious during this project that Kate and my communication was not always clear. Later, in making interview transcripts, I became aware that Kate and I often talked in parallel. We took turns to talk, making observations and conversational points that, while initiated by each other's words, did not respond clearly to each other's intended meaning. Kate might broach a topic and state her opinion only to have me select one aspect of that topic and take it in my own direction. Genuine communication did occur but it incorporated a lot of miscommunication, misinterpretation and distraction. Kate and my communication in these instances is not clear; rather it is disjunctive, connected by a similar area of intention without connecting with, or understanding, what the other party is actually saying. The *visual identity project* revealed that *disjunctive communication*, as much as clarity in communication, is an active aspect of communication design action.

### **Design process**

This research is not concerned with analysing the design work I completed with Kate. I describe the process here so that the reader can get a thorough understanding of the steps taken, the role of artefacts within those steps and how those artefacts facilitated the interaction between Kate and myself.

Following Kate and my first meeting I reviewed the symbols Kate had shown me in *Écrits* (Lacan 2006 [1966]), a text with which all Lacanians are familiar (*figure 2.2*). I sketched some symbols and diagrams that might be appropriate to form part of a visual identity (*figure 2.3-2.5*). I typeset Kate's name and address in a range of different typefaces to identify which were appropriate (*figure 2.6*). I drew quick sketches combining these typefaces and symbols and selected some of these to develop into mock-up business cards on a computer (*figure 2.7*).

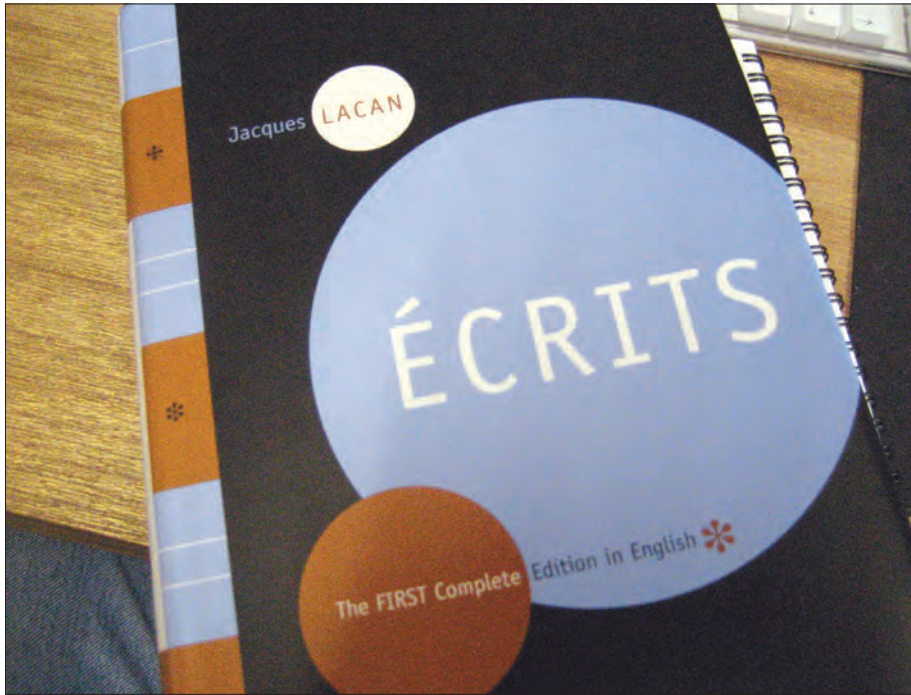


figure 2.2 Kate's copy of *Écrits* (Lacan 2006 [1966])

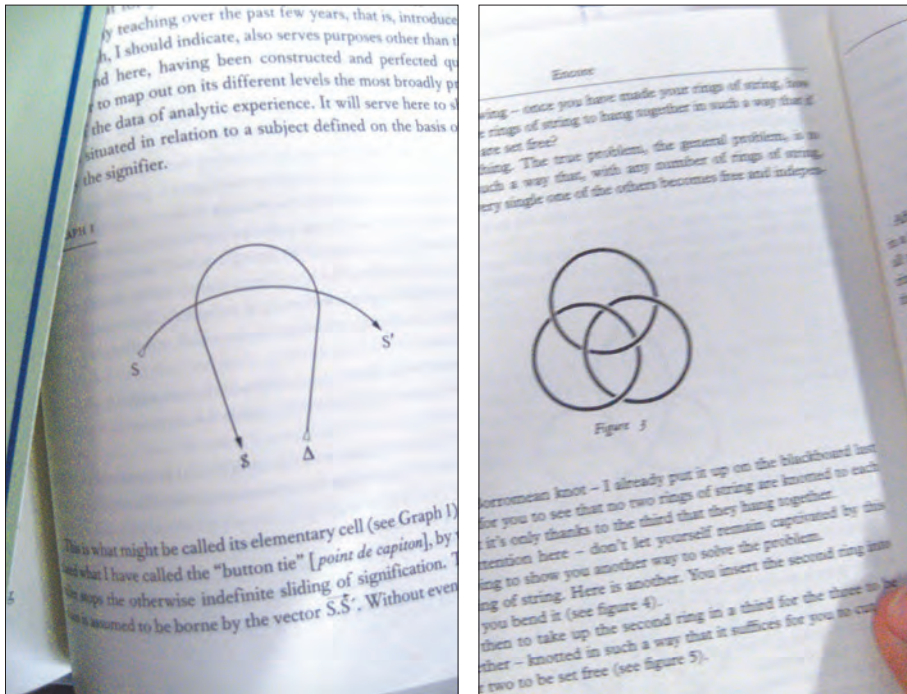
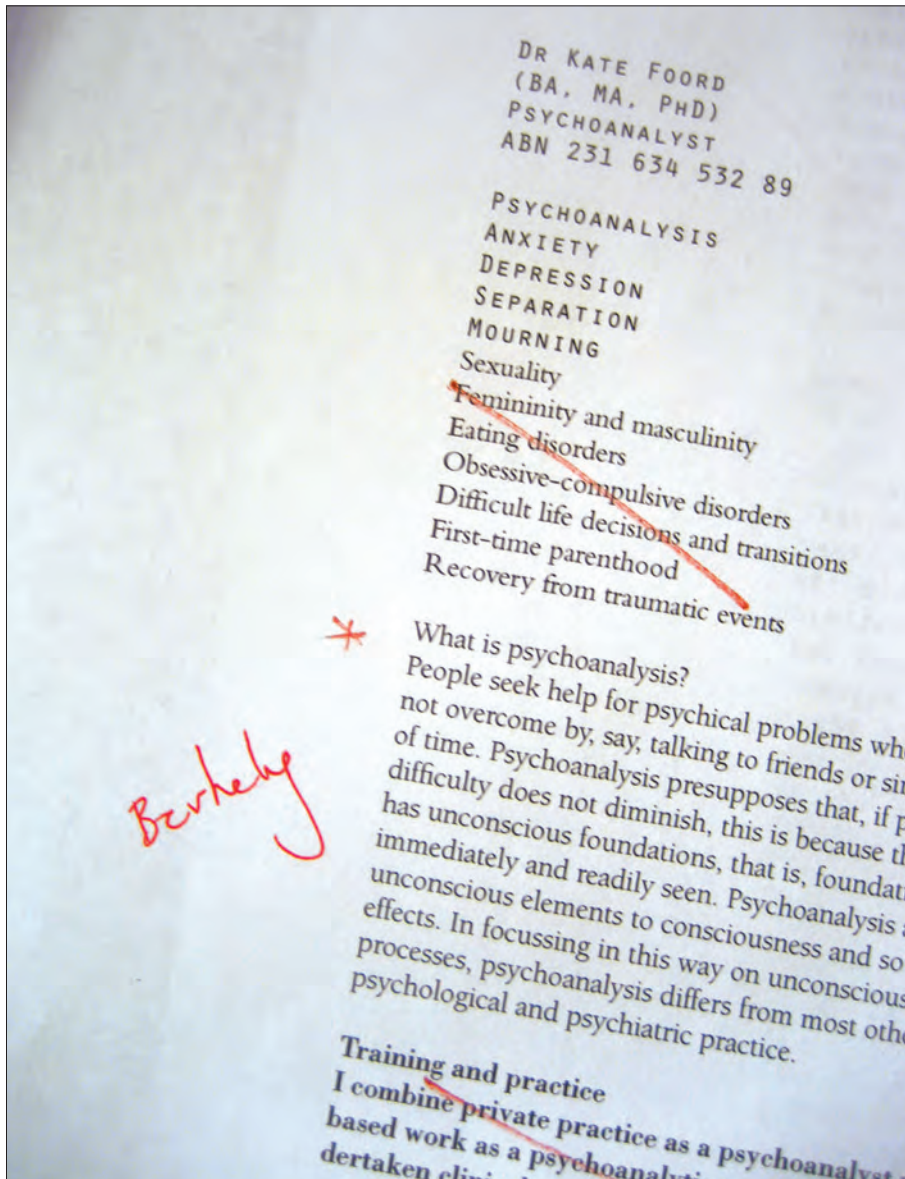


figure 2.3 and 2.4 Lacanian psychoanalytic diagrams from *Écrits* (Lacan 2006 [1966]).







**figure 2.6** Typeface tests. From top to bottom—Orator; Bembo; Berkeley; Bodoni. Orator was the typeface finally chosen for all Kate's printed material.

I used the form of a business card to aid in developing the first iterations of Kate's visual identity (figure 2.8-2.9). As a business card was one of the items Kate had indicated she wanted to produce, my work applying the identity to a business card would be useful later. Additionally I have found that it is a useful provocation to propose a new identity using a physical artefact. Rather than presenting a new design for an identity on paper or mounted on board, where it is viewed without context, a mock-up business card can be seen, handled and its 'use' as a physical artefact can be trialled.



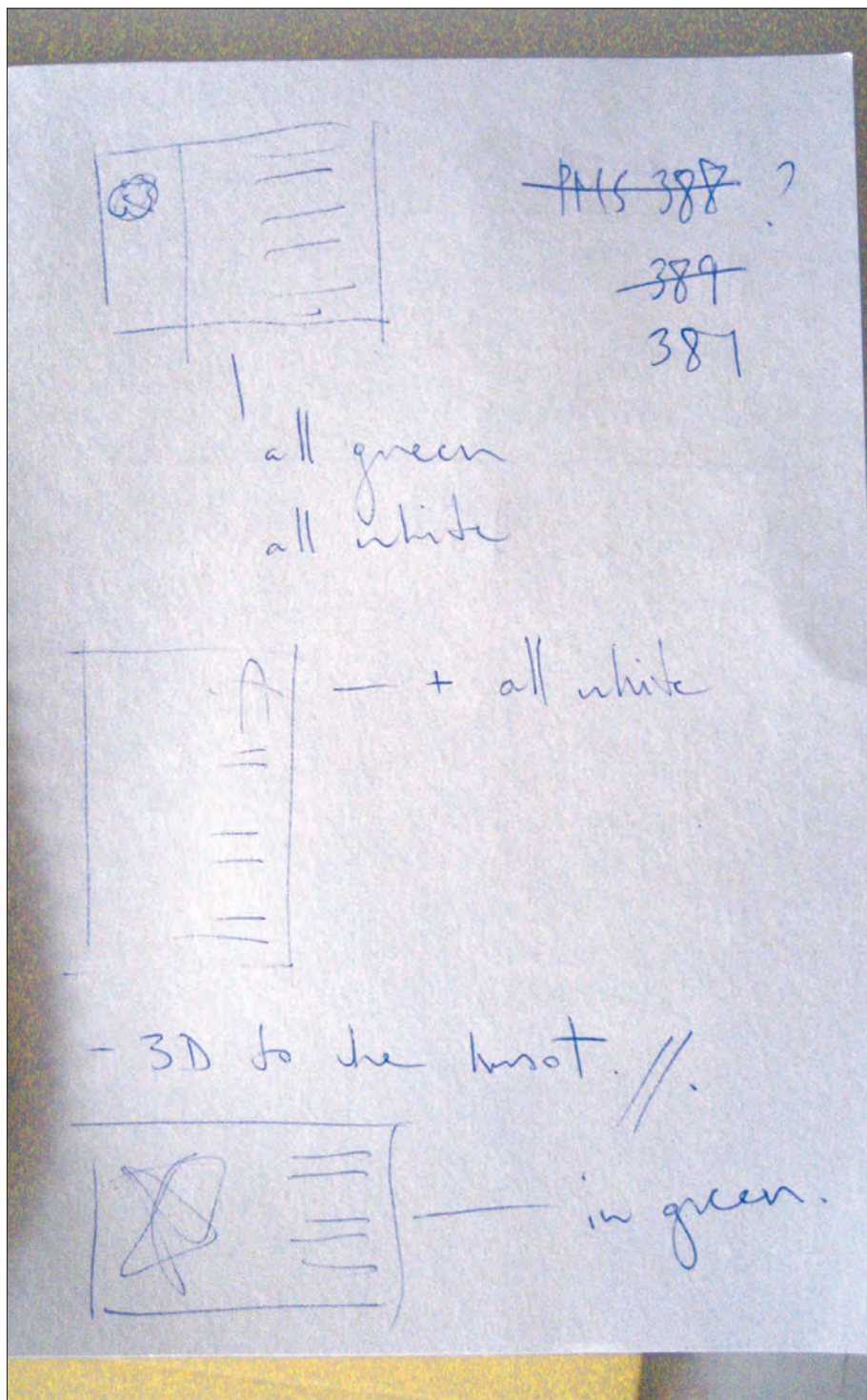


figure 2.7 Initial scamps describing alternative colours and use of the psychoanalytic symbols.



*figure 2.8* Adobe Illustrator 'artboard' showing initial variations on Kate's visual identity applied to a business card format.



*figure 2.9* Details of Adobe Illustrator 'artboard' showing initial variations on Kate's visual identity applied to a business card format.



### Heuristic collaboration

Kate began the *visual identity project* a sense of what form the outcome might take. I developed my own during the first meeting. In retrospect we commented that neither of our predictions were correct. Instead the final artefact form was discovered during, and through, our work together. As Kate later commented during our interview:

*It's interesting that what we ended up with was something that I didn't expect us to come up with, and I don't think you expected either ...* (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).

Our discovery-through-making was a loosely defined heuristic approach to locating the artefact that would appropriately define the 'place' that Kate wanted her new business to occupy. Again, as she stated, it was a place for which Kate said 'there was no precedent' (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March). We were both learning as we uncovered and defined that place. We also achieved this work together—neither of us knew exactly where we were going, or what we would find out, and neither of us could have produced the work on our own. As such the communication design activity could be described as an heuristic collaboration.

## PROJECT REFLECTION

### A phenomenological investigation

In previous research I have found that detailed journaling enhances my ability to ‘notice’ an experience (Mason 2002). In making journal entries for this project I attempted, as much as possible, not to edit or synthesise the text I wrote, instead aiming to record, as far as possible my direct personal experience of the work with Kate and the events that took place. There is a phenomenological aspect to the research design of this project; I wanted to record the project as it was experienced rather than analyse or synthesise those events through a pre-selected theory.

### More than an instrumentalist activity

As I discussed in the *introduction* chapter, although this research is titled ‘communication design and *the other*’ it does not aim to focus on what might be described as ‘design for an other’. ‘Design for an other’ suggests an activity in which a communication designer moves from an understanding of an other to design an artefact that conveys that understanding to an audience. This comprehension of practice is common; the design writer Jorge Frascara defines communication design as ‘broadcasting specific messages to specific sectors of the public’ (Frascara 2004, p. 2). The aspect of communication design he describes here, although often seen as the totality of practice, is not what I wish to investigate in this research. While the design and production of ‘specific messages to specific sectors’ is part of the work Kate and I did, the aspects of practice I wish to understand better through this research are the ways Kate and I worked as individual subjects *collaboratively* in order to make those communication design artefacts which broadcast Frascara’s ‘specific messages to specific sectors of the public’.

Frascara’s terminology privileges an instrumentalist view of communication design practice. There were instrumentalist aspects in the work I did with Kate. She came to me for my ability to ‘design a few things’. I have over twenty years of experience and have developed a strong knowledge base in visual composition, typography and the appropriate application of media and materials. I am familiar with the software used to produce the artefacts of communication design. I am experienced liaising with printers and other suppliers in order to produce communication design artefacts. As such I have the ability and the tools to compose type, image and colour, over time, interactively and spatially. Kate Foord does not have my professional knowledge and access to the means of production. From an instrumentalist point-of-view it would appear that Kate and my work involved the use of my professional aptitude and tools to make the artefacts that would communicate Kate’s new business identity. However reflection upon the *visual identity project* suggests that if we confine our sense of the activity of communication design to these instrumentalist limits then we might miss other important aspects of the activity.

The aspects of communication design practice this research project aims to investigate are intersubjective; they are activated *between* subjects. I am not Kate. I do not inhabit

the world as she does. My work as a communication designer requires me, in some degree, to understand or empathise with her. When I practise design, I attempt as far as possible to ‘put myself in her shoes’. Superficially Kate was not particularly ‘other’ to me; she was a similar age, a similar culture and she used the same language. She even demonstrated a high level of sensitivity to the visual qualities of artefacts during our meetings. However, there is a limit to how far I can empathise or understand Kate. I can never *be* Kate; I can never *fully* understand her nor *fully* empathise with her. For me she is *the other*, as I am *the other* to her.

Additionally, like any subject, Kate does not have direct access to all aspects of her self; new aspects are revealed as she takes on new roles and develops new capacities. Revealing new aspects of her self; her new practice and how it should be communicated, was part of the work we did together.

My analysis of the *visual identity project* begins to reveal that communication design can not only be defined as Frascara’s act of communicating ‘specific messages to specific sectors of the public’, but is also an act of discovery that collaboratively locates what ‘specific message’ is to be communicated and to whom. Cameron Tonkinwise, the design theorist, states ‘what is at stake in the making is a knowing’ (2008). When Kate and I developed her ‘specific message’ through a series of propositional artefacts, we undertook a process of making knowing. This *knowing through making* can be seen as a process of design through design; the propositional artefacts enable communication, both between Kate and I, and within ourselves. New knowledge is found and new artefacts are designed in response to that communication.

The proposition that the ‘specific message’ Kate and I discovered through making is a sort of knowledge will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, *Knowing: the other reflected*. It is enough to posit here that new knowledge is discovered through making, with *the other*. This *discovery through making* occurred between Kate and myself, neither one of us generated the final outcome independently. The making process that produced the final artefact occurs across an intersubjective space and, furthermore, is activated by that intersubjective space.

### **A generative practice with, and through, *the other***

It is, of course, possible for an individual subject to make work and design communication design artefacts without *the other*. As design theorist Cameron Tonkinwise, following Schön, describes it, making requires a form of intersubjectivity:

*Back-talk is how design moves, or interventions into the virtual space of designing, are evaluated. Schön’s version of designing involves a designer pro-posing into a unique and complex situation a materialisation based upon their historical repertoire of schema. Evaluation of the move then involves projection of the designer’s subjectivity into the virtual space of designing (Tonkinwise 2007, p. 6).*

That which is made material is external to ourselves, it demands an extension of our subjectivity. Making and designing generate the new and evaluate it with the agency of the exteriorised material artefact. What then is the effect of *the other*? How is making with *the other* of a different order than making without *the other*?

The *visual identity project* suggests that the presence and agency of *the other* creates disjunction in making. This disjunction in making acts to problematise that making. The disjunctures are not random—though they might not be comprehensible, they extend from another’s subjectivity, creating an intersubjective dialogue.

This is similar to the process of dialogical meaning generation that Russian linguistics scholar Mikhail Bakhtin describes for language. According to Bakhtin, in contrast with other theories of meaning, words gain their meaning *dialogically* through our use of them with other people:

*The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes ‘one’s own’ only when ... the speaker appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic expressive intention* (Bakhtin 1986 [1979], p. 277).

The work of communication design with *the other* takes place in a similar dialogic intersubjective space.

The term ‘dialogic’ has different meanings for other practitioners. Jan van Toorn, a Dutch graphic designer, uses dialogic to describe design artefacts which have the intention of engaging their audience in a dialogue with the artefact. The artefact aims to deliver an open-ended or provocative communication (van Toorn 2010). Van Toorn’s aim to produce dialogic design artefacts is in contrast with Frascara’s traditional sense of visual communication delivering unambiguous information. Although van Toorn’s work provokes many interesting, and timely, questions in the field of communication design, the sense with which he uses the term ‘dialogic’ is not the sense that I use in this research.

In addition to Bakhtin, another use of *dialogic* that correlates with my use of the term is that of Hans-Georg Gadamer, a German philosopher, known for his work in philosophical hermeneutics:

*To allow the Other to be valid against oneself – and from there to let all my hermeneutic works slowly develop – is not only to recognize in principle the limitation of one’s own framework, but [it] also allows one to go beyond one’s own possibilities, precisely in a dialogical, communicative, hermeneutic process* (Gadamer 2000, p. 285).

I suggest that it is the aspect Gadamer's refers to as 'going beyond one's own possibilities' that is initiated through a dialogical process of making with *the other*. Going beyond one's own possibilities takes a designer beyond the role of an individual designing material artefacts. From the client's point of view this dialogic process allows insights into, and access to, aspects of one's self that cannot be accessed alone. Bakhtin also refers to this ability for *the other* to reveal aspects of ourselves that without *the other* remain hidden:

*In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space, and because they are others* (Bakhtin 1986 [1979], p. 6).

Making with *the other* is of a different order to making without *the other*, and key to this is the intersubjective nature of that making with *the other*.

### **Communication design through communication with *the other***

Design, as a verb, is taken by Donald Schön (amongst many others) to refer to the act of a designer working, as an independent agent, in 'conversation with the materials of a situation', using their designerly abilities, listening to the 'back-talk' from their propositional artefacts and producing outcomes (Schön 1983, p. 78).

The *visual identity project* suggests a different understanding; design as the act of a designer designing, in an intersubjective relationship with *the other*, through the process of communicating with *the other*, activated by miscommunication as much as by communication. The attempt at intersubjective communication with *the other* brings about the disjunctive nature of the process, thus enabling the design activity to be generative for all participants.

The initial design work that I completed alone following my first meeting with Kate is sometimes seen as the full extent of the activity of 'design'. Schön refers to this designer/artefact conversation within his book *The Reflective Practitioner*:

*In a good process of design, this conversation with the situation is reflective. In answer to the situation's back-talk, the designer reflects-in-action on the construction of the problem, the strategies of action, or the model of the phenomena, which have been implicit in his moves* (Schön 1983, p. 79).

Once I showed Kate my initial design work however, a process beyond that described by Schön took place. As Kate put it during our conversation, when she saw the work I had produced she could then form an ‘argument’. She became able to articulate her argument back to me, which led to further iterations in the process of design.

A client’s response to initial design layouts or mock-ups is often seen as the bane of the communication designer; a designer perfects their ‘design solution’ only to see it stimulate new responses from the client, responses that were not forthcoming during initial meetings. This can often produce animosity towards clients and a combative relationship between designer and client. Kate mentioned that during her work with other designers in publishing quite often an ‘antagonistic relationship (is set up) between an editor and a designer’. She said that sometimes the designer insists ‘on the look in a way that effaces the words’ and ‘you end up in this tussle’ (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).

My experience as designer is reflected in a journal entry I made during Kate’s project:

*I felt the pressure beforehand of the presentation. I didn’t want to show her for fear of rejection and I didn’t know how to cross the bridge of actually showing her, just like it always is, it is always like that ... I was rooting around in my folder, I actually put the work in a manila folder so she couldn’t see it straight away. Then I thought ‘well I better show her now’, since we seem to have discussed everything else ... then I opened the folder, and thought, ‘well there’s nothing else for it’, pulled out the A4 sheet and laid it on the table (N Haslem 2008, journal entry, 2 September).*

Tension exists on both sides of Kate and my relationship. My analysis of the *visual identity project* suggests that this tension is related to the generative potential of communication design and *the other*.

### **Artefacts enabling communication with *the other***

Common synonyms for making are creating, fashioning, composing, constituting, preparing, fixing, enacting and establishing. The act of making entails an act of creating something that did not exist previously or arranging things that did in a new way. The act of making communication design artefacts does this; it materialises something that did not previously exist. Once made, the new artefact can be experienced as an external object. It can be seen, handled and reflected upon.

In the case of the *visual identity project*, as is frequently the case in design practice, the making of artefacts provoked the making of other artefacts. The artefacts, be they prototype business cards, dummy web pages or draft flyers enabled both Kate

and I to see propositional visions of her visual identity, made material. The artefacts provoked new directions, and further propositional artefacts, until an appropriate outcome was found. With time and work Frascara's 'specific message' is materialised through the activity of design.

This 'specific message' did not previously exist; the *visual identity project* was not a case of merely transposing text to a website design. Rather the process was one of transformation; the message was discovered, reified and concretised through the activity of design, instantiated in a new form. Kate had experienced this process previously in her work in publishing, and she indicates its transformational quality:

*It always surprises me when something happens to text and it becomes a different thing, you know, an object, that has a way of ... well I guess what I'm looking for is something that can carry me into situations which help me to 'make a practice'* (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).

Before our second meeting I printed out the mock-ups and mounted and trimmed them so that they had the size and weight of business cards. I did this to give Kate a physical sense of how her business card, her proposed *visual identity*, might communicate as an artefact. These mock-ups were propositional artefacts. As far as possible they emulated the final finished artefact so that Kate could embody the work and her new business identity. As Kate later commented, when speaking about the design process in general:

*You know, a finished product I could tell you what I think of it, and I'd have a whole argument there, but I don't know how to produce that, either technically or in my imagination ...* (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).

In using the word 'argument' Kate refers to the knowledge she obtains once she can see, and hold, the mock-up design artefact (*figure 2.10*). She doesn't have the designer's experience or technical training to imagine how a particular image or combination of image, colour and type will communicate once it is finalised. She cannot make the visual imaginative leap required to know that a particular composition might work better with a different typeface or in a different colour. My work as communication designer includes the work creating propositional artefacts, or 'mock-ups', finished enough to allow Kate to respond to them. Those artefacts allow Kate access to her opinion. When she holds those mock-ups they allow Kate to articulate her 'argument', for or against, appropriate or not. Akin to the commonplace expression 'I'll know it when I see it' the propositional artefacts allow Kate to 'see', and after 'seeing' to 'know'. Another commonplace phrase; 'give me a look', generally means 'give it to me so I can hold it and look at it'.



*figure 2.10* Mock-ups of design variations for Kate's visual identity.

These responses are not available without the artefacts, nor are they available without both Kate and my input into those artefacts. The propositional artefacts have their own agency. Each artefact embodies a propositional future and is provocative due to this.

Needless to say, the difference between reversing an image out of green and printing it in a rich black is unlikely to have a profound affect on anyone's future, Kate's or my own. However, seeing, feeling and interacting with the different propositional artefacts allows Kate and I to become conscious of whether those futures are futures we want, and are prepared to support, or not. The propositional artefacts suggest, through their concreteness, futures that were otherwise unable to be imagined; now that I can see this image reversed out of green I might wonder if an earlier image might work better reversed out of green. Occasionally a propositional artefact might take us further. When I see my name and new title typeset on a business card, I can start to believe that future is possible, it might even have the agency to precipitate that future.

### **Artefacts to reveal, and activate *the other***

In my email to arrange our first meeting I suggested that Kate find some other communication design artefacts that she liked or that might help me understand what she wanted. She brought two business cards and a DL flyer to the first meeting, commenting that she didn't like one of the business cards, that it was 'unclear and messy' (*figure 2.11*). She preferred the other business card; her own from her work as community psychologist (*figure 2.12*). She described this card as 'clear and communicative'. The DL flyer example (*figure 2.13*) came from an accountancy business. Kate said that she thought she might need something like this for her new business. Someone had recently asked her to leave some information about her practice and she thought that a flyer similar to the accountant's might be an appropriate article to carry this information.



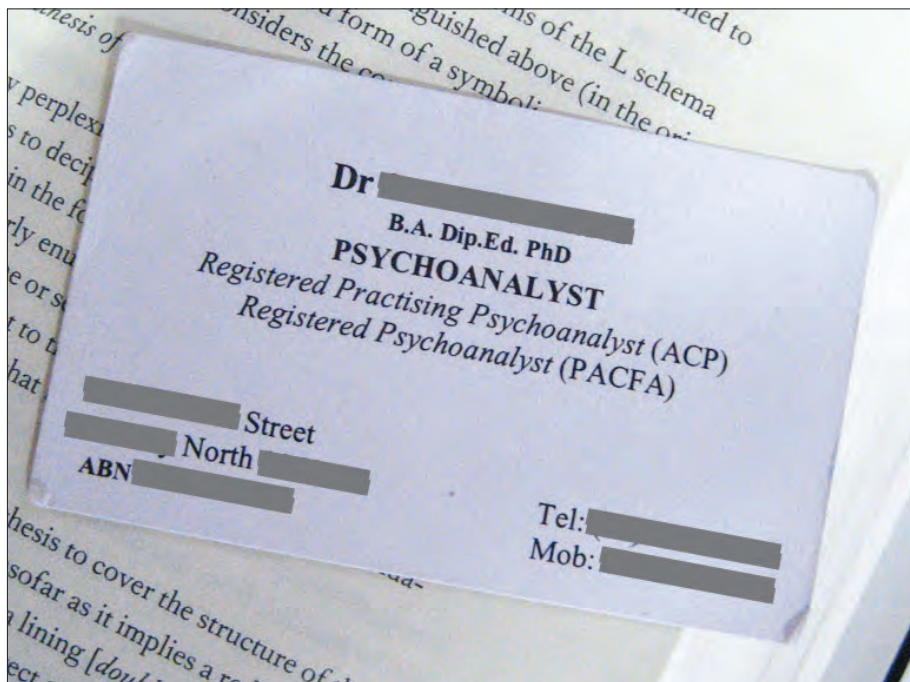


figure 2.11 The business card example that Kate described as ‘unclear and messy’ (name obscured).



figure 2.12 The business card example that Kate described as ‘clear and communicative’.

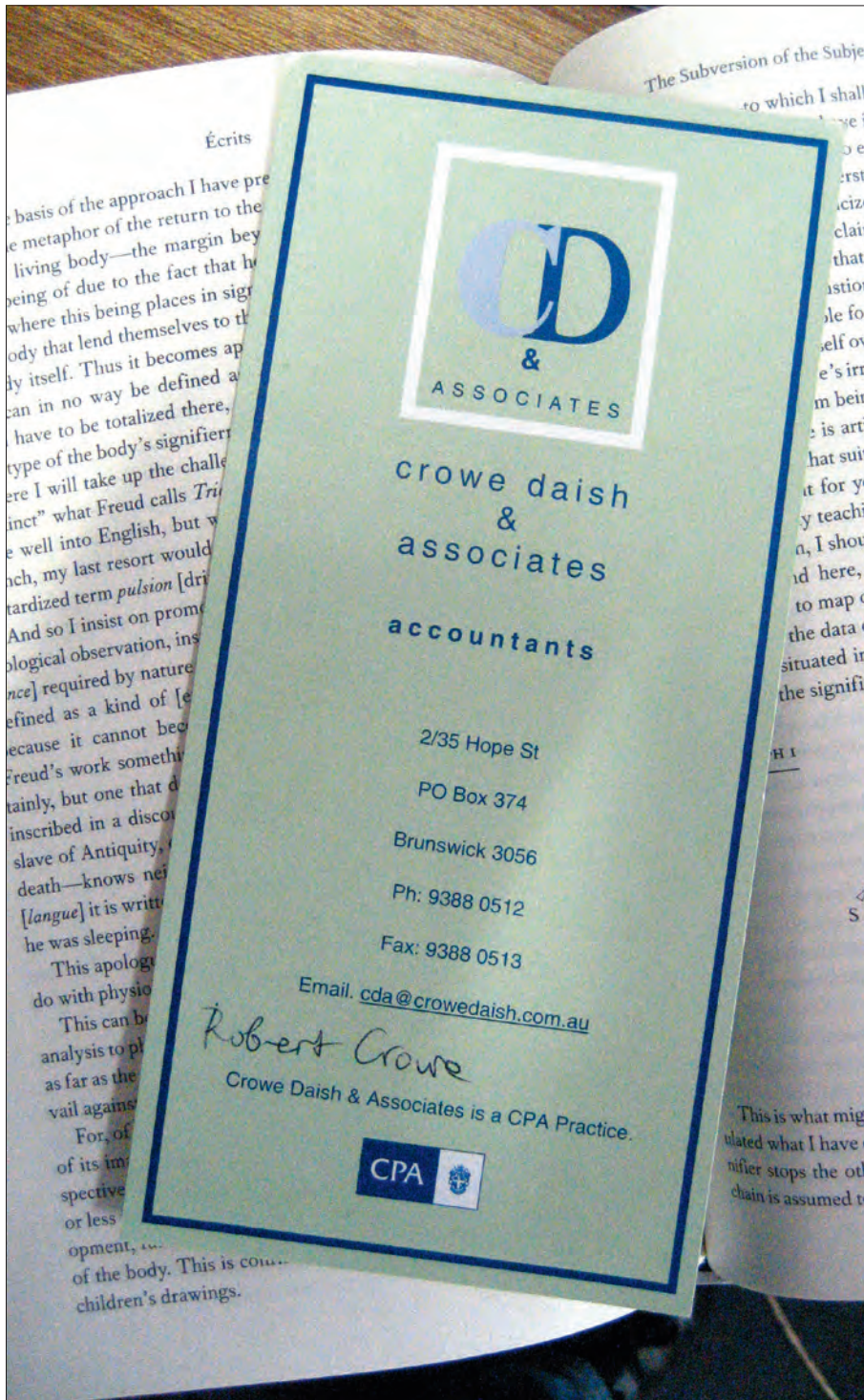


figure 2.13 The example DL size flyer.

Kate brought these examples of communication design artefacts in order to start to define the type of artefacts we would make for her. These example artefacts provided the means with which we could start to locate and ‘make’ the ‘place’ where her new identity should be situated:

*On the one hand I've thought this [commissioning design work] is a way to start a practice, I don't know how other people start a practice but this is a way I can think of. On the other hand its really edgy-making; it has to work, it has to look like that place that hasn't been made before is being made properly, in a way that doesn't betray the people to whom I'm connected (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).*

The artefacts Kate brought to the first meeting created a bridge that allowed us to communicate across our differing levels of expertise. Kate used the example artefacts to start to situate the ‘place’ where she did, and did not, want her business visual identity, and consequently her practice, to be located. She indicated later in our discussion that from her previous experience in publishing, working as an editor with designers:

*I think that where two people come into a relation of work from disparate fields you can end up having a lot of anxiety in that encounter (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).*

In bringing the artefacts to our first meeting, and clearly stating her opinion about them, Kate was able to foster an understanding across our ‘disparate fields’. It was not that I agreed with all of Kate’s appraisals; in contrast to Kate I appreciated the simplicity and straightforward quality of the ‘un-designed’ card that she described as ‘confusing’ (figure 2.12). However, as I heard her response to each artefact I quickly gained an understanding of her point-of-view that, later, I could extrapolate and apply to the new work we created. The example artefacts enabled Kate and I to communicate, not only across our ‘disparate fields’ but across our subjectivities.

### **Artefacts instantiate hermeneutic/heuristic steps**

Kate and my responses to my mock-up artefacts, and our more developed responses to each other’s responses, help to create commonalities in the intersubjective space between us. The artefacts provide artefactual nodes and instances of communication within that intersubjective space. They are concrete artefacts allowing connections in the intersubjective space, in much the same way as Kate’s original example artefacts, except that the propositional mock-ups *could exist* rather than ‘do exist’. They are examples of what could be rather than what is.

The mock-ups are physical manifestations of the hermeneutic activity of intersubjective communication; they visualise to Kate my *interpretation* of the things she has said to me in relation to her new business. Through my action, as *the other*, she is given



an understanding of how her intentions, and her communication of her intentions, have been interpreted by *the other*. Seeing my interpretation allows her access to self-knowledge she could not have without *the other*.

This, I would argue, is the most important action of communication design with *the other*; its ability to provide the client with access to self-knowledge that they would not otherwise have. The means through which this self-knowledge is accessed is the give and take of responses to artefactual nodes in the intersubjective space. Rather than a linear series of monologic statements our responses to the propositional artefact become an *inter*-connected *inter*-weaving of understandings, impressions and intimations. To quote from Bakhtin again (describing an encounter between two different cultures rather than two different individuals):

*Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched.*  
(Bakhtin 1986 [1979] p. 7)

Likewise Kate and I are not ‘merged’ or ‘mixed’ in the design process; we maintain our individuality but are, to use Bakhtin’s term, ‘mutually enriched’. Kate and my working relationship with the artefacts could be described as a dialogic negotiation of difference.

When I discussed earlier that I have a ‘friendly and casual’ working manner, and that Kate and I ‘worked together’, one might get the sense that the design activity I describe is convivial and supportive and composed of like-minded individuals; this is not correct. Kate and I are not ‘on the same page’. We are as different as any individuals are different. The will to find common ground exists but we remain different people; clear communication is elusive if not impossible. Although Kate and I both aimed for clear communication we are always only individuals; we act together in a disjunctive way. It is in this way that *the other* comes into the act of communication design; as a disjunctive interruption and provocation. This research suggests that it is through an engagement with *the other* that the activity of communication design instantiates an intersubjective space of generative potential.

### **Communication with *the other* through communication design**

When I listened to Kate during the first meeting I listened as an outsider. I heard what she said and interpreted it; I did not hear it as though I was Kate speaking. When I presented the first mock-ups to Kate she was given a sense of how I had interpreted her. Kate said she ‘loved’ those mock-ups when they were first presented. Later, once she’d had time to reflect, she came back with suggestions and ‘arguments’ for further iterations. In my journal notes made after this meeting I wrote ‘the honeymoon is over’. I meant that the work had now entered a familiar, and more disjunctive, phase. During

this phase Kate provoked me to develop the design further—and in a different direction—than I would, or could, on my own. On the other hand I provoked Kate's responses with 'this is what *you* say but this is what *I hear*' visual responses.

Kate and my responses were not the same and they were also not necessarily logical (although we might search for justifications)—they are not just a form of debate with artefact as evidence. Instead each response—brought into consciousness, spoken, emailed, or made material and given external form—stimulates and provokes, not necessarily a series of ever-refining iterations, but the jerky release of ideas which were not previously present in the world:

*What I find really interesting about design is that ... it's a risk at every moment ... you as the designer must be producing the product, the final product ... and it's not that process at all, it's an iterative process in which you ... you're producing ultimately what can come out of this process ...* (Kate Foord 2009, pers. comm., 10 March).

The work I produced for Kate was not final. Instead, as Kate states, it was a moment in an ongoing process. The design artefacts I produced during that process allowed us both to move on to further iterations, which provoked further responses. Initially this process happened without Kate's input while I composed the first mock-ups following our first meeting. Once Kate had seen those first mock-ups she was able to articulate her own argument and further iterations followed. The final outcome produced for Kate is less a solution than yet another moment in that process (*figure 2.14*).



*figure 2.14* Mock-up of design variation for Kate’s visual identity.

## CONCLUSION

The *visual identity project* provided a series of observations about communication design and *the other*. The first observation was that Kate and my communication was not always clear. If we follow Frascara's definition of communication design then one might be inclined to think that the important information communicated during the activity of design will be the clear unambiguous information that can be *transposed* into graphic form for communication to a target audience. During the *visual identity project* I observed that Kate and my communication was sometimes disjunctive. This disjunctive communication was as important to the design process as the clear communication. It appeared to be through the presence of disjunctive communication that the design activity became *transformational* rather than merely a *transposition* of spoken information to graphic information. The second observation was that anxieties are present in the relationship between designer and client. Kate and I both described feeling anxious during the design activity. Kate about whether she could, or should, enable the change she wished through communication design artefacts. My own anxiety arose during our negotiation of that range of iterative artefacts. The third observation was that Kate and my relationship was a critical part of the design activity. Rather than a peripheral but necessary start to the design activity it appeared that it was through Kate and my relationship that the design activity was allowed to take place. The fourth observation, and the last to be noted, is that the design activity was an heuristic collaboration. Kate and I worked together through the design process. We discovered the direction we took as we took it. We were able to do this due to the action of design and the propositional artefacts that were produced. Neither of us knew what the final chosen outcome would be until we found it together.

These four observations suggest a series of understandings, the first being that communication design is more than an instrumentalist activity. Although communication design is often described, and conceptualised as, an instrumentalist practice, this only describes an *aspect* of practice. The critical nature of Kate and my relationship and the ability for our work to reveal new understandings to both of us reveals a more complex and holistic view of practice. Secondly this project suggests that communication design is a generative practice with, and through, *the other*. Communication design, through access to *the other* has the capacity to reveal and create the new; it is a generative practice. Thirdly communication design is enabled *through* communication. The process of communication design is activated through the designer and client's attempts at intersubjective communication. Fourthly communication design artefacts, both propositional and final, enable intersubjective communication. Fifthly communication design artefacts instantiate hermeneutic steps. Within the intersubjective space formed during the activity of design the artefacts produced are physical instances of the designer's interpretation of *the other*. They provide material access to *the other* within ourselves. Finally the *visual identity project* suggests that *communication is enabled through communication design*—communication design artefacts creating connections across the intersubjective space thus allowing communication to occur.

These observations and understandings indicate a role for communication design beyond that of the production of artefacts that communicate. The *visual identity project* indicates that the knowledge incorporated into and communicated through the design artefacts arises during the process of design with an other; in other words we see communication design as epistemologically active; as having the ability to change what the participants in the design activity know; and further, to change what they *can* know. The analysis of this project also indicates that along with the capacity to create knowledge the process of design is active in generating *what is*. That is, the activity of communication design has the capacity to be ontologically generative; through the process of design Kate and her community of stakeholders come into knowledge of herself and her practice. Simultaneously Kate gains access to knowledge about her new ‘business self’, and how it might come to be in the world.

The next two chapters, *knowing: the other reflected* and *being: the other in practice* discuss further the epistemologically and ontologically generative capacities of communication design and *the other*.



CHAPTER THREE  
KNOWING: *THE OTHER* REFLECTED





## INTRODUCTION

The *student mirror project*, conducted in the latter half of 2008, allowed me to research communication design, knowing and *the other* in a design education context. In this chapter I describe the student brief from which the *student mirror project* extended and examine my inspiration for that brief. I then discuss the understandings gained both during the facilitation of the brief and, upon reflection.

The student brief introduced reflective practice to coursework Master of Design students over the duration of one semester. It incorporated two stages, the first in which they worked with their fellow students as clients and designers, the second in which they were given the opportunity to produce an artefact based on their experiences and their reflection upon those experiences. The brief aimed to encourage students to incorporate elements of reflexivity into their developing practice as designers. It also introduced them to the experience of working with actual people (clients) during their design activity, with the added complexity that results from this. Students were engaged directly in the dual roles of designer and client and asked to reflect on their experience of those roles. Through an emphasis on reflective practice students were given the opportunity to experience a design practice that brought intersubjective engagement and negotiation to the fore.

It quickly became clear to me that the experience the brief offered the students was less common within design education than I realised. The brief engaged students in the negotiation necessitated by designing for actual people and, in so doing, placed them in a situation that Donald Schön, author of *The Reflective Practitioner*, describes as one of ‘uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict’ (Schön 1983, p. 50). Through the addition of actual people to the student design brief the design activity became far more complex. Students could no longer rely solely on the application of (their developing grasp) of the type of professional knowledge Schön refers to as ‘technical rationality’ (p. 30), but were required to negotiate the complexity of intersubjectively activated design.

### Project aim for this research

My main research aim for the *student mirror project* was to introduce *the other* to a student design studio and observe how students experienced and responded to *the other* as part of their design practice. Student briefs are more commonly based on imaginary clients, with the lecturer acting as a stand-in for that imaginary client. In contrast, the *student mirror project* gave students the experience of designing for, and negotiating with, an actual client—one of their fellow students. I was given the opportunity to see how design students experienced working with, and for, *the other*.

A major impetus for this brief came from my experience—described in the introductory chapter—of being ‘designed for’ by a student designer, and the insights it offered me.

Through being ‘designed for’ I became more clearly aware of a number of intersubjective aspects of the communication design activity. The experience of being ‘designed for’ provides unusual reflective opportunities, especially for a designer, as designers themselves are not often *designed for*. I had been practicing for twenty years before I was *designed for*. The *student mirror project* gave students the experience of being designed for at the same time that they themselves ‘designed for’ other students.

Another impetus for the *student mirror project* was a previous student brief that I facilitated in 2007 at the University of Tasmania. This was an introductory brief for first year design students and did not require design knowledge or skill. The students were asked to fill in a form with ten questions about their interests, aspirations and ambitions. These questionnaires were then re-distributed, anonymously, throughout the class. Students were required to design and produce a three dimensional object based on the questionnaire they had received. Although the students knew that the person who filled in the questionnaire was a fellow student in their class, they were big classes of students new to one another, and students did not know who the authors of their questionnaires were. I didn’t write this brief and when I first read it I thought its value would be as a straightforward ice-breaker. It later became clear that this brief engaged students in a provocative and revealing exercise. It demonstrated the complexities and difficulties involved in interpreting a very limited text-based ‘client brief’, and simultaneously the capacity of even highly inexperienced designers to interpret that limited information and produce artefacts that proved provocative and interesting to their ‘client.’ To a small degree this brief also stimulated the intersubjective aspects of design activity—at the completion of the project the person behind each students’ anonymous questionnaire was revealed and the student designer gave their object to that person. As facilitator I was intrigued by the way this brief demonstrated the hermeneutic aspects of designing culminating in a demonstration of the provocation provided by a designer’s materialised interpretation of another person. I aimed to incorporate the interpretative and intersubjective elements of this earlier design brief into the *student mirror project*.

In developing the brief for the *student mirror project* I was influenced by design theorist Clive Dilnot’s 1993 essay *The Gift*, which philosophically re-interprets the design act as an act of attentive gifting. Dilnot argues for the possibility that designers can produce dialogical items (rather than mere objects of consumption and possession) which can provide ‘a means of establishing concrete relations with the other’ (Dilnot 1993, p. 55). Dilnot states ‘objects (help) make us. Making (and designing) are moments of making (and designing) ourselves’ (p. 56). He goes on to argue for the essentially ethical and intersubjective nature of design. Dilnot’s paper influenced my writing and thinking in making the brief, I attempted to combine these experiences and deliver them as a coursework masters exercise to design students. I also used it to introduce and define the focus of the brief to students. In this chapter I reflect on my experience facilitating the *student mirror project* and examine the understandings revealed in relation to communication design, knowing and *the other*.

## The brief

The brief was written for Swinburne University of Technology's master of design coursework programme. The students in this course are a combination of multimedia design and communication design students. Multimedia design students specialise in designing and producing online, time-based and interactive materials. Communication design students specialise in designing and producing print based communication materials, brand communications, and packaging and publication design.

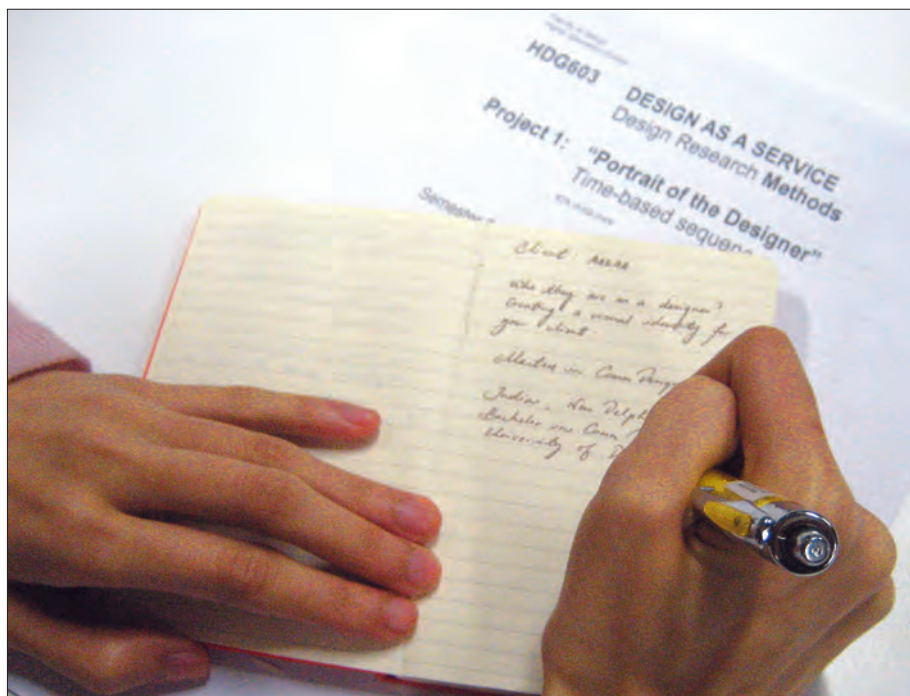
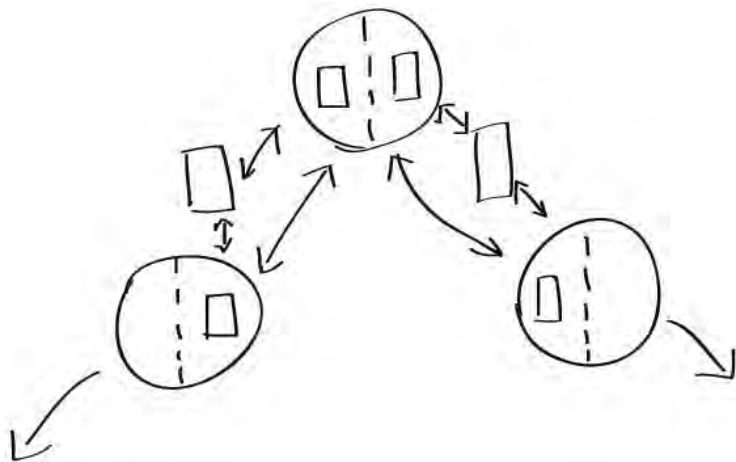


figure 3.1 Part one of the brief with a student's notes.

I wrote the brief in two parts—the first was titled *Portrait of the Designer* and the second *mirror, mirror...* (figure 3.1). The first part of the brief required each student to take a dual role as both designer and client (figure 3.2). Students were asked to design a short animated sequence that promoted their client's (a second student) individual design abilities and focus. Simultaneously a third student would likewise design an animated sequence for the first student. Every student in the group acted simultaneously as designer for one student and client for another.



**figure 3.2** Each student took on a double role—of designer to another student's client and client to another student's designer.

As designer, each student was required to organise a series of meetings with their client, gain an understanding of them and produce an animated sequence that represented them and promoted their client's strengths and their own individuality as a designer. When acting as a client each student gave feedback on their student designer's design concepts. Clients needed to approve their designer's storyboards before final animations could be produced (*figure 3.3*).



**figure 3.3** Initial 'client meeting' between two students.

The second part of the brief *mirror, mirror...* required students to reflect back on their experience as both designer and client: What had they learnt from this experience? What insights did they gain? What did they learn about design practice? The students were required to synthesise this reflection and communicate it using a material form of their choosing—a publication, an animation, a website or any other appropriate form.

### **Experience of the brief**

Once the brief had been introduced to the students I was quickly made aware of how unusual this experience was for my students. Students commented on how difficult they found it working with their client. Tensions arose in the studio as the student designers found it difficult to arrange and manage meetings and achieve effective client communication.

While the students were experienced with the more common imaginary briefs in which they were asked to design a solution to a pre-framed design problem, the current brief was a unique challenge to many of them. Student design briefs often focus on challenging the student's ability to adequately research and synthesise information and incorporate this into a refined design solution. The student's design solution is evaluated on its ability to communicate and answer the pre-set brief. In contrast, this project brief required each student to work directly with another student as his or her client. This brought a heightened complexity to their work. No longer was the problem pre-framed, instead it became a complex, shifting situation as the idiosyncrasies of the clients interrupted the design process. Aesthetic considerations and decision-making became complex, as students were required to overlay their own aesthetic judgement with that of another.

Students' comments while engaged in the brief were illuminating regarding the intersubjective experience of designing. They often commented that their client liked a particular solution whereas they preferred an alternative solution. Some clients were guarded which made it difficult to find inspirational starting-points. Other clients failed to arrive at agreed meetings, or made judgments about the design concepts that the student designer's found hard to understand. Some clients were reluctant to give any feedback at all.

Not all aspects of the brief were difficult. Clients were excited by the prospect of being 'designed for' and enjoyed the unusual attention of someone focusing intently on them and working to produce an artefact that represented them in an interesting and appropriate way. Clients were intrigued by a storyboard that they found potentially interesting. Many student designers also enjoyed the opportunity to get to know more about their fellow students.



## Design knowledge

There are different types of knowledge involved in the practice of design. When the architect and design educator Bryan Lawson writes about design knowledge he is referring to 'what designer's know' (Lawson 2004, p. 1). Lawson attempts to provide a case for the knowledge that designer's possess which enables them to do design. He discusses the technical knowledge and the knowledge of facts but he states that the main interest of his book *What Designers Know* is to examine 'knowledge in action' (Lawson 2004, p. 3). He describes this knowledge in action as 'knowing how' and quotes leading design academic Nigel Cross' phrase 'designerly ways of knowing' (Cross 2006) to define the focus of his interest. If designerly ways of knowing exist then Lawson wants to know what exactly is the knowledge, and the way of knowing, that designers possess. His intent is to understand expert designer's ways of knowing and thereby enable student and early-career designers to develop similar expertise. Another implicit agenda for his book is to support a valorisation of design knowledge as a particular and valuable knowledge within the broader community and among other professionals and practitioners.

Lawson's conclusions are far-ranging and I will not detail them here. It is enough to say that they are based on aspects such as the development of design concepts (knowing what a building is), the acquisition of precedent (knowing prior work), development of guiding design principles (knowing guides and their application), the ability to recognise appropriate design responses (knowing what works) and having a repertoire of tricks (knowing how to produce impressive solutions) (Lawson 2004, p. 113). Lawson's design knowledge is knowledge that is owned by the designer. Designers apply this kind of knowledge in order to solve the design problems they are presented with.

Another way design knowledge has been examined is through discussion in relation to how and what sort of knowledge design research produces. An examination of design knowledge by Australian design academic Peter Downton situates such knowledge in comparison to scientific research (Downton 2003, p. 78). He describes the knowledge and knowing of design and design research as emergent, in the sense that it becomes apparent to the designer. It is also emergent in the sense that the processes of design brings knowing and knowledge into being and uncovers the designer's need for both (Downton 2003, p. 104).

Downton's positioning of design knowledge describes a different aspect than Lawson's. He makes a case for design as a knowledge creation process and for the embeddedness of knowledge in design outcomes, in one way or another.

He states that the designed work itself gives evidence of knowledge in a number of ways. Firstly the knowledge that is available for scrutiny within the work itself; secondly the knowledge that has been embedded intentionally into the work; thirdly the knowledge that the designer intended to embed but which is not intelligible by others (Downton 2003, p. 106).



My research argues for adding another form of knowledge to the three Downton declares embedded in the design artefact—that which is emergent through the design process with another. This knowledge is new and situational, specific to and created by the activity of design with another. It is embodied propositionally within the design artefact, which then has within itself the agency to stimulate further knowledge. This knowledge is not Lawson's knowledge that the designer develops through practice and applies to a particular design problem, nor is it Downton's knowledge that is obtained during the process of design and embedded intentionally by the designer in the work. Rather, this knowledge is accessed through the process of design with *the other* and is articulated (and embodied) propositionally in artefactual form. As design theorist Cameron Tonkinwise puts it so succinctly 'what is at stake in the making is a knowing' (Tonkinwise 2008, p. 3). It is this type of design knowledge that I intended the *student mirror project* to bring to the fore.

Previously I have made an argument for the value of 'not-knowing' on the part of the communication designer (Haslem 2007), and that 'knowing'—in the rationalist problem solving sense—can sometimes prevent a designer's ability to reflect-in-action and generate new intersubjective knowledge through the activity of design with *the other* (Haslem 2009). The risky and complex nature of maintaining a position of 'not-knowing' while continuing one's action as designer—intentionally occupying and active within the situation of design—can be an uncomfortable one. The brief I wrote, and from which the *student mirror project* extends, aimed to put coursework Master of Design students in this uncomfortable, but I would argue, pedagogically beneficial position.

### **The Reflective Practitioner**

Donald Schön's influential 1983 book, *The Reflective Practitioner* investigates practice-based knowing and 'how professionals think in action'. As the design academic Kees Dorst notes, Schön's positioning of design is constructivist (Dorst & Dijkhuis 1995), in direct contrast to the positivist theories of Herbert Simon and others which frame design as a rationalist problem solving activity (Simon 1996). Schön offers important insights into practice as experienced by practitioners and how some professionals (the reflective practitioners of his title) use situated knowledge and knowing-in-action as an integral part of their practice.

His description and promotion of the concept of 'reflection-in-action' has enabled professions and the education of professionals to move beyond theories that suggest that their profession is solely involved with the competent application of pre-established generalised principles to solve defined problems. 'Reflection-in-action' gives the practitioner a tool with which they can engage with complex situations and construct 'theory-in-action', allowing them to be effectively engaged in new situations with complex variables and values (Schön 1983, p. 20).

One of the aims of this brief was to engage students in some of the issues Schön describes and enable them to be introduced to a number of the reflective techniques he describes. These techniques enable professional practitioners to negotiate complexity. A further aspect of Schön's book is his description of 'back-talk'. He applies the term 'back-talk' to the process through which a design practitioner makes a 'move' or takes an action and then 'reflects-in-action' on the consequences and ramifications of that move. The reflective practitioner is then able to listen to the 'back-talk' of the situation, in other words take note of the consequences, and adjust their practice-in-action in the light of that 'back-talk':

*As he tries to make sense of it [the situation the practitioner is in] he also reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understandings which he surfaces, criticises, restructures and embodies in further action (Schön 1983, p. 50).*

The student brief aimed to provide an opportunity for the students to practise, reflect on practice and thereby experience some of the qualities and potentially take on some of the attributes of Schön's 'reflective practitioner'.

### **Reflecting on (student) practice**

Although Schön describes designing as 'a conversation with the materials of a situation' (p. 78) the *student mirror brief* attempted to go beyond this designer/artefact scope to engage students with the intersubjective aspects of practice with another.

The brief gave students an opportunity to experience, and reflect on, the intersubjective aspects of design practice. Simultaneous to their attempts to define and communicate the specificities of another student's design practice they experienced another student attempting to grapple with their own practice.

Inevitably the results of an attempt to portray another person, or an aspect of that person, will never be complete or accurate. Making the attempt does however involve an intention to focus on another person. Each student had the experience of designing the portrayal of another student in a short animation. Simultaneously each student also had the experience of another student designing a portrayal of him or her. The focus of another on oneself is unusual and can be flattering. The subject of the portrayal finds themselves the object of inquiry and attention. The result can often surprise; the focus that the portrayal takes, the particular elements of a student's personality, history or tastes that are given material expression are often surprising to the subject of that work. The portrayed student is given an insight into how they are perceived by their student designer—a view of their self through the eyes of *the other*. In this way, if they are open to the possibility, the student clients have the potential to gain insight into unseen aspects of themselves. During the final presentations it was possible to see students' perceptions of one another shift as the animated portrayals were shown to the class.

The brief held a range of rewards and challenges for the students. Some felt gratified by the attention. Some disliked being represented by a short animation that oversimplified their felt sense of their complex individuality. Some students were confronted by what appeared a gross misreading of themselves. Some felt honoured by the effort involved in producing a piece of work and the genuine interest that was shown towards them by their student designer. Along with recording the difficulties they had communicating with clients the student journals also recorded the surprise and joy at having another person interpret one's position and the use of that interpretation to produce a material record. Some of the students produced work that communicated unseen aspects of their client with convincing visual rhetoric and narrative clarity. Other students in the class, following the group presentation of the animations, looked upon their fellow students with newfound interest and empathy. Whatever their experience, each student was put in a position whereby they were able to immediately reflect their experience of being a client back to their own action as designer with their own client.

Thus, given the opportunity to directly empathise with both the designer's and the client's experience of design, students were able to see the agency of design, its ability to efficiently synthesize vast amounts of information and create convincing narrative, as well as its ability to over-simplify or emphasize distracting aspects. Through these experiences I hoped students might gain some insight into their own agency when practising professionally.

The mirroring aspect of the brief was deliberately confrontational. Through the circular nature of the brief the students were faced with a reflection of their own actions from outside those actions. The second part of the brief asked students to reflect back on their experience and create a new design artefact which synthesised their 'reflection-on-action'.

Students' reflective journals recorded experiencing the inability to communicate clearly or reconcile another person's viewpoint with their own. The journal entries often included surprise and frustration at the inability to find common ground or enable 'complete' communication. The incommensurable aspects of intersubjective communication are a new experience to many young student designers. The problem-solution model that forms the bulk of their education may not provide them with adequate tools for negotiating real-world design situations.

This brief introduced the students to the complexity of design in the relatively safe environment of a student design studio. Free from the hierarchy and commercial imperative of professional practice, students are given a greater chance of reflecting on the experiences gained. Rather than arming the student designer with techniques and systems in order to reduce the complexity of design practice this brief attempted to introduce some of that complexity into the design education studio along with the reflective tools to negotiate that complexity.

## CONCLUSION

A disadvantage design students face as they complete their design education is the imaginary nature of much of their project work. While an advantage at times—in that it allows students to practice without the pressures of commercial imperative—the imaginary projects can reduce the complexity of design that student's experience. The *student mirror project* required students to experience design as an intersubjective activity. There is an argument that students need to learn 'graphic language' and the manipulation of the space, type, time and narrative before they can start to think about the broader implications of design activity. However I would argue that the shift in emphasis provided by the brief gave students access to important foundational knowledge about how design affects its participants, and as such, established important foundational knowledge for them to begin practice as a designer. The *student mirror project* enabled me to experience students negotiating the complexities of practice with *the other*.

The complexity of lived practice can be brought into the student design studio by inviting external clients to work with students. This often has many benefits in terms of establishing collaborative creative teams and familiarity with negotiating time management and financial risks (Haslem & Woodward 2007). It does not however give students the experience of being 'designed for'. With a brief that offers this experience students are brought towards an experiential understanding of the effect of their actions when they design. Through a literal reflection (experiencing another student designing as they design) those students are given the opportunity to reflect on their actions as they act. They are confronted with the effect of their actions as a designer; in becoming cognisant of these effects they are given the opportunity to become aware of their agency as a designer and the responsibilities implicit in design action.

Schön's reflective practitioner is a practitioner engaged in the complexities of practice. This practitioner does not have all the answers. They work with clients in a conversationally orientated manner, enabling a complex design task to be entered into and reflected upon, without the necessity of applying a reductive system to simplify the situation. The work produced results from being present within, and intent on, a design situation. The work can usefully be described as the result of an engaged negotiation with the complexities present in that situation, as opposed to the more common view of designers simply solving design problems.

Design theorist Cameron Tonkinwise frames it thus; 'after the Cartesian subject comes the knowing practice of making' (Tonkinwise 2008, p. 9). He refers here to Rene Descartes' sixteenth century philosophy that extended from the only secure knowledge that he could locate—the subject, himself—*cogito ergo sum*, 'I think therefore I am'. From Descartes onward Western knowledge has extended from this

radical rationalist perspective. Descartes' foundation for knowledge, and the practices it supports, connects directly to the positivist framing of design practice by Herbert Simon and others. In contrast the work of Tonkinwise and Schön posits a different framing for a making-based reflective practice. The knowing of reflective practice is not based in the *cogito* but in making. The *student mirror project* allowed me to observe student's reactions to this alternative framing of practice and knowledge. Further, my observations and reflections on the *student mirror project* have suggested that design knowledge might not only be found, as Tonkinwise and Schön state, in the designer's making, but also in the negotiated practice of intersubjective making with *the other*.

The *student mirror project* revealed possibilities for educational application of this research's concerns. It also helped me to understand the way in which *the other* is involved in the production of knowledge within the practice of communication design. The next chapter *being: the other in practice* extends these epistemological aspects of communication design practice to an investigation of reflection on the ontological aspects of communication design and *the other*.



CHAPTER FOUR  
**BEING: *THE OTHER* IN PRACTICE**







## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the *practitioner interviews project*, reflecting on it in order to investigate communication design, being and *the other*. Firstly I explain the *practitioner interviews project*—how I designed the project, why I designed the project as I did, and who was involved. I then analyse the project in the light of the concerns of my research, and the specific concerns of this chapter. The *practitioner interview project* allowed me to investigate the intersubjective aspects of communication design practice through discussions about practice with other designers.

In the course of this research I interviewed three communication designers. Some of the observations made during the interviews reiterated those already made in the *visual identity project* and *student mirror brief*. My interviewees gave instances of disjunctive communication, negotiation, the heuristic nature of designing, design occurring through communication and communication design as an act of knowledge production with *the other*. My analysis of the *practitioner interviews project* builds on these observations to reveal that the act of communication design also accomplishes an act of change in *being* whereby both client and designer can obtain, and communicate, new understandings of themselves and the world through the activity of communication design. This suggests that communication design is not only an ontologically *generated* act—arising from a negotiation of views of *what is*—but further to this, that it is an ontologically *generative* act, having the agency to locate, concretise and change participants ontological understanding.

### The design of the interviews

These interviews enabled me to extend this research and view the intersubjective from a different perspective—that of the professional design practitioner’s experience of practice. My interview sample was selected from communication designers with whom I had already had a level of familiarity and trust. I hoped this would allow us to engage in an open conversation. I was initially concerned that, when asked about their practice, communication designers might feel it prudent to give a response that concealed those very aspects of practice I was interested in investigating. This concern arose from my own experience in industry. Most studios I have worked with in the past have articulated their design process in a seamless manner that belies my experience of that process while working within that studio. Communication design is a commercial practice in a competitive market and the manner in which a studio articulates their design process publicly can have an impact on the perception of that studio by the market. Consequently it can be in the commercial interest of designers and design studios to represent themselves as highly competent practitioners with a proven and effective design process. In my experience, however, seamlessness does not describe the way most design projects are carried out. Disappointments and compromise are part of the process, along with success and efficiency. Relationships with clients can often become fraught. Difficulties arise and the negotiations through those difficulties are an

important aspect of the process of design, and are particularly relevant to the concerns of this research. I hoped that if I chose designers I already knew personally they would be more likely to speak openly about the difficulties, disappointments and negotiations required during their practice.

When choosing candidates for the interviews another risk I foresaw was that if I chose high profile designers they might be more inclined to articulate a rehearsed theorisation of their practice. Research into design practice often chooses to focus on the acknowledged experts within design (Cross 2006; Lawson 2004) and this can appear the logical group to interview if one wants an insight into design practice. However, I wanted my interviewees to articulate directly, and without rehearsal, their lived experience of design. I did not want interviewees accustomed to articulating their practice who may have answers ready-at-hand that they could use in response to my prompts. Consequently I avoided using high-profile studio heads and instead selected sole practitioner communication designers. Sole practitioners, though dedicated and highly experienced, do not have the responsibility for the economic welfare of an entire studio and its employees resting on the market's perception of their design process. They are also not habituated in the articulation of their own design process to others.

Although I would argue that this research, as a whole, has validity across the breadth of communication design practice, I have found that sole practitioners experience the role of *the other* in practice more keenly. They are not able to delegate the task of client and stakeholder negotiation to other studio members or specific 'client service' personnel. They are required to negotiate every aspect of each project, from initial discussion through to final production and invoicing. These numerous aspects of practice continually challenge designers to engage and negotiate with *the other*, in all its guises.

I chose mid-career experienced designers with between five and ten years experience running their own small studios. The designers I interviewed had worked with a range of different clients over a number of projects. With five to ten years running their own studios they were likely to be well-established communication designers with a vested interest in maintaining the efficacy and longevity of their practices. My interviewees were Melbourne based. I hoped that these designers' tacit knowledge and lived experience of practice would be revealed during our discussions. I hoped that the discussions with the three different interviewees would allow me to see the role of *the other* in communication design revealed from three distinct perspectives.

I asked each practitioner to bring along a project on which they were currently working so that they could speak directly about their design experience without having to cast their minds back to or rationalise with hindsight. I did this to enable my interviewees to 'reflect-in-action'. Donald Schön describes 'reflection-in-action' as a complement to a practitioner's tacit knowledge or 'knowing-in-action' (1983, p. 54). When a practitioner's 'knowing-in-action' or ordinary practical knowledge encounters new or unusual aspects

to situations then ‘reflection-in-action’ can adjust a practitioner’s ‘knowledge-in-action’ to account for those new aspects. I hoped that reflecting upon a project that they were in the midst of would allow my interviewees to articulate their ‘reflection-in-action’ extending directly from the immediacy of their practitioner knowledge.

I also hoped that having a current project in front of them would act as both a trigger and concrete grounding for their reflections on their design practice. Designers are, in general, familiar and comfortable with the act of talking through projects while leafing through folio pages. The presence of projects might also allow me to problematise my interviewees articulation of practice. Rather than discuss generalised ideas about ideal practice our discussion could extend from the events and experiences that were occurring during the interviewees example project. In the course of the discussion I would ask questions such as *why did you end up deciding not to use the first outcome?*, *how did you resolve that difficulty?* and *what surprised you about the client’s reaction in this instance?* In not directly using the term *the other* my hope was that the presence of *the other* would reveal itself rather than be pre-empted by my questions. However I did want the conversation to explore the concerns of my research, to this end I designed and produced fifteen prompt cards for use during the interviews (*figure 4.1*). These prompt cards had a keyword printed on one side and were blank on the reverse. The interviewee selected a card at random from the facedown cards and then used the keyword they had selected as a starting point to discuss their practice.



*figure 4.1* Prompt cards used during interviews for the practitioner interview project.

I had found from a previous use of the prompt cards in a research project that they appeared to create a ‘third voice’ during the interviews. Although I had originally chosen the keywords on the cards—and in so doing had set the agenda for the discussion—once the cards were positioned upside-down on the table between myself and interviewee they appeared to ask their questions with a voice distinct from my own. When a card was chosen randomly by the interviewee, rather than take the role of the interviewer asking the questions, I was able to take part in the discussion of that keyword with the interviewee. The dissociation between the cards and myself allowed a forthrightness that I would otherwise find difficult. The cards did not have direct questions on them—instead they had single keywords deliberately left open to interpretation—but asking someone to respond to the card they picked made the words on the card into questions.

Each of the fifteen cards used in the *practitioner interviews project* had a single word printed on them; *risk, voices, society, plan, problem, expression, participate, known, unknown, work, new, teach, learn, negotiation* and *future*.

These keywords were selected based on key themes that emerged from a text-based mapping of my research concerns. I aimed for the cards to be directive and focus the conversation in the areas I was interested in but not to be, or at least not appear to be, prescriptive. Each keyword represented aspects of practice that emerged from a visualisation I had made earlier of my research concerns. For example the prompt card featuring the single keyword *voices* was based on the following terms and questions relating to practice:

*conversation / rhetoric / participants / ownership*  
- *how are different people involved in the design activity?*  
- *what roles do they take?*  
- *how does the work represent the people who were involved?*  
- *how does it communicate with other people?*  
- *what sort of voice does the work speak with?*  
- *who owns the information communicated in the work?*  
- *what does the work say to the people that interact with it?*

In this way the prompt cards represented the research concerns. I did not show my interviewees the background concerns for the keywords, instead interviewees could interpret the single word in the manner they chose. However, from my earlier visualisation of my research concerns, I knew what each prompt card represented for my research. If I noticed that my interviewee was taking the conversation in a different direction or had not spoken about a particular aspect I wanted to cover I might suggest this aspect to them. For example when Ellen picked up the card ‘future’ her immediate response was to talk about her own future as a designer; instead I asked her whether she could talk more about her client’s future and how the work she had done for her client would affect that future.

During each interview I first asked the designer to introduce the project they had brought and explain their role and the project's stage of development. To prompt my interviewees in this regard I pre-prepared a range of questions:

- *who are you working with on this job?*
- *has your view of those people changed during the work?*
- *what roles do those other people take?*
- *what roles do you take?*
- *how does the work you design show evidence of the people who were involved in it?*
- *what sort of input do the other parties involved have during the job?*
- *how does this input affect what you do?*
- *what are the first steps when you meet someone you are working with?*
- *what is achieved in those early meetings?*
- *to what level do you come to know the people that you work with?*
- *does the work change the people who you work with?*
- *does the work you do with other people change you?*

I would first ask some or all of these questions based on my own judgement and interest. I would then spread the cards out facedown and asked the interviewee to select one and talk about their example project in relation to the keyword printed on that card. The discussion continued, interrupted occasionally by the selection of new cards. The cards also acted as prompts for me, reminding me of questions I might want to ask or directions I'd like the conversation to take.

### **The practitioners and their project examples**

The three designers I interviewed were remarkably open in their responses and spoke candidly about their experiences working with their clients. Some of the example projects my interviewees discussed remain current and to maintain commercial confidence I have changed my interviewee's names and altered or omitted any specific aspects of their projects that might enable them, or their clients, to be recognised. I refer to them as Ellen, Derek and Nathan for the purposes of this exegesis.

The three practitioners interviewed all work independently as sole practitioners rather than as members of established studios. However, the example project Nathan showed me is one in which he is working collaboratively with a group of colleagues. The three designers I selected for interview have all worked commercially for periods ranging from ten to twenty years. They have all taught, or continue to teach, design at a tertiary level. They have all had past experience working in larger studios before starting their independent practices.

Ellen discussed an identity project she was developing for a friend who was starting a new fashion design label. She asked Ellen to design a visual identity, some swing tags, a label and to help with the shop design. She also asked Ellen for help with her website

design but Ellen wasn't sure whether she felt prepared to accept that aspect of the work. The name of her friend's fashion label was forced to change suddenly during the project causing considerable difficulties. Ellen preferred the work she had completed on the original name and felt frustrated that her client had not thoroughly checked the availability of the name before commissioning the project.

Nathan discussed a large interpretation design project for a new museum to be housed in restored sections of the original mud-brick buildings on the outskirts of a major Arab city. He had joined together with some colleagues in order to complete the interpretation design and they had been working on the project for over three months. Nathan was responsible for designing the interior graphics and planning the layout and interpretation design for various rooms of the museum.

Derek's project, like Ellen's, was also a visual identity, this time for an exclusive holiday house on an island in the Great Barrier Reef. One of his established clients is a property developer from Victoria. The luxury house is a small but personally significant project for the client. The client had recently finished construction and wished to market the new building as an exclusive 'getaway', complete with live-in chef. Derek was enjoying working on the project; the budget was sufficiently substantial for him to allow significant time refining the work. The exclusive nature of the holiday house also allowed Derek to consider the use of expensive premium printing processes and paper stock and to design a thoroughly considered website that reflected the quality of the product.

## THE INTERVIEWS

### Ellen and her friend the fashion designer

*Note: Except where otherwise indicated the direct quotes from Ellen's interview come from an interview conducted between Ellen and myself, Neal Haslem, on 5 March 2009. A second short interview occurred on 19 March 2009, quotes from this interview are dated.*

Ellen began by explaining that her example project was for a fashion label and that the client for the project was a friend, adding that 'when you design for a friend versus when you design for someone you don't know it is a very different ballgame.'

Ellen felt that her client didn't know much about working with communication designers. She found that her client expected her to produce work with extremely short timelines, due to the fact that this was the way the client was used to working herself. Her client has been working in retail for a number of years and has decided to set up her own fashion label. Ellen commented that 'she's that type of person who jumps in the deep end, she's got a lot at stake.'

Ellen felt that since her client was also a friend there was a casual quality in their relationship; however, Ellen emphasised that there was a 'lot at stake'. This was a major financial commitment for her client and there was a significant personal ambition at risk. Although it was initially a paid project Ellen had started doing some unpaid work:

*The initial thing wasn't pro bono ... but I have been doing [unpaid] work ... like I've just art directed a photo shoot ... there's parts of the shop fit-out I've been involved in, because once I started doing this I just became more involved in the creative work behind it and thinking about what the brand is and all those types of things.*

It was clear during our discussion that Ellen cared very much about the work she was doing. She was prepared to work unpaid if needed to ensure that her work was applied as well as it could be. She explained that the quality of the work she does is very important to her, and that she had difficulty finding studios where she could produce work to the level of quality she desired. For this reason Ellen had chosen to work as a sole practitioner and give herself the freedom to choose her projects and her clients, thereby controlling the quality of the work, even if she didn't get paid properly.

Ellen then talked about the organisation of the project. She said that in the past she might be accused of 'over-documenting' jobs, meaning being overly explicit about what she as the designer would deliver—how many concepts, how many proofs, how much she would charge for corrections—and what the client's responsibilities were to ensure the work progressed smoothly. With the example project, since she was working with a friend, she reduced the amount of documentation and took a more casual attitude to the business side of things. Ellen talked briefly about the business aspect of design

and how it is difficult to work creatively with someone and then change focus and discuss payment. She thinks that this is one of the advantages of working in a bigger studio, in which an account manager is usually employed to take charge of the financial side of things.

Ellen designed the visual identity for the fashion label first and then applied her design to a business card, label and swing tag. Her client chose to manage the print production for the project; Ellen told me she knew this would cause problems but agreed since the client was a friend. As Ellen predicted, there were problems during the production of the first swing tag and she took over print production from that point on saying, 'I had to step in and re-negotiate it.'

Ellen said that once the labels and business card were complete her client/friend was very happy with the work; however she stated on a number of occasions during the interview that 'there's always trickiness.'

Soon after the fashion label's retail outlet opened Ellen's client had a complaint from another fashion label. This business had a very similar name as the name Ellen's client had chosen for her business. Ellen's client had known about the similarities at the time of choosing the name but felt that the other business was in a different sector of the fashion industry and would not object. The other business *did* object about the similarity in naming and Ellen's client agreed to change her business name. By this stage of the project Ellen's visual identity had already been incorporated into many materials. Ellen had to change the name to a similar one with enough difference to avoid copyright issues. Rather than start again and come up with a complete re-design her client opted to change two letters of her four letter name and maintain the style of the typographical treatment. Ellen discussed at some length how difficult she found this:

*I get quite attached to what I'm doing.. and so I'm trying not to get upset about it ... it took months to actually resolve whether she was going to change the name ... and then there was for me 'ok this client is a friend' and do you recharge for re-doing and all those types of things? ... and in the end the name had to be changed and the logo now is not as successful.*

Once Ellen altered the label's visual identity she felt that it lacked the finesse of the original; it had lost its playful references to fashion and fabric that she had incorporated by the use of the letterforms to represent pinking cuts and material off-cuts. It had also lost the geometric counterpoint that played each letterform against one another.

For reasons of confidentiality I have not shown Ellen's visual identity variations within this document; however, one can imagine the significance of changing the letters of any typographically driven visual identity. The visual quality of each letterform is developed



by the designer to combine into a consistent whole. To change elements after the fact is to fracture an harmonious concept and composition. In Ellen's case she had designed the individual letterforms herself, investing significant time refining her original visual solution. Once Ellen had changed the identity some items were re-printed and some items had stickers of the new name/logo placed over the old name/logo.

In my opinion Ellen managed the name change adeptly. She altered her visual solution to avoid her friend's business being involved in a damaging copyright infringement case, yet she maintained the spirit and visually striking qualities of her original visual identity. However, in her opinion, 'the logo now is not as successful'. When Ellen sees the current identity it reminds her of her original work, and represents a compromise. When Ellen first showed me the work she showed me the original visual identity—this is the work she is proud of. Although I understand Ellen's frustration I am not as close to the work and I think that her new design was a necessary and well-executed compromise that continues to carry a lot of the visual strength of the first iteration of the logo and has negotiated the necessarily complicated contingencies of communication design with *the other*.

Ellen showed me how her original visual identity remained present in elements of the shop design. Since Ellen's letterforms were highly geometric shapes they could lose their 'letter' reading yet the patterning and style remained consistent with the new visual identity. Almost as an aside Ellen stated about the retail outlet fit-out, 'well it's a start-up but yes, people walk in and they love the shop.' Ellen's work appears successful in supporting her friend's new fashion label, despite the compromise and the difficulties of the job. It is interesting to note that in Ellen's case her communication design work is in the fashion industry. In this industry a 'label' is a shorthand way to refer to a clothing design company as a whole. As Ellen designed the 'labels' that would appear on the back of her friend's clothing, she simultaneously designed her friend's clothing design company's 'label'—in this way the fashion industry reveals clearly that the visual identity is the label and the label is the company.

Ellen then discussed her friend's website and her work as art director during photographic shoots. She said that, although she is not a web designer and didn't want to take on the website design, she did want to brief the web designer on the visual style she had developed for the identity. Ellen spoke to her client about the site and what she wanted to achieve with it and realised that the site presented an opportunity to support her client's aims of achieving wholesale sales. Ellen felt that by designing the site carefully they could give a sense that her client's business was not in its infancy but was established and successful. This would then make it more likely that her client would attract wholesale contracts. Her client wanted Ellen to design the website, and the website designer agreed to build the site based on Ellen's design; however, Ellen didn't feel comfortable doing this since she had never designed a website before. She preferred to brief a web designer and art-direct the website but leave the rest of the work to them.

In contrast to her experience with the web site, Ellen said how much she enjoyed working with the photographer. Unlike her experience with the web designer, the photographer understood her brief and Ellen could art direct without being required to actually take the photographs. She felt the web designer didn't have the same ability to listen to her or understand how she required the website to look. Ellen feels that she has now been left designing the website—an area in which she feels she has no knowledge and consequently doesn't feel comfortable working in. Ellen doesn't really want to get more involved in the website but her personal involvement in the project might require it:

*I'm invested in it in the sense that I actually ... I've enjoyed the art direction of the photography and I feel like from that perspective it's quite fulfilling, I like the way the shop fit-out turned out, I liked the initial identity, and so I feel like from that perspective it's creatively interesting ...*

This supports Ellen's original statement that she finds she gets too involved in projects—finds it difficult when her work is compromised—and finds herself working *pro bono* in order to complete the work in a way she is happy with.



At this point in the interview I laid the prompt cards facedown on the table and asked Ellen to pick one. She picked the card with the keyword *future* and asked me 'future of my career?' Although I had said earlier that she should free associate with the cards I said that rather than talk about her future as a designer I would like her to talk about the future of her client and the future of the work she had done for that client.

Ellen then told me that she had recently spoken to her client and had an open conversation with her about their working process together. Ellen had aired her feelings of frustration with the short deadlines that she'd been given. She had also told her client that, contrary to what she might think, if Ellen was doing *pro bono* work, she became even more interested in ensuring the work was as good as she could make it, rather than just trying to get it done quickly. Ellen advised her client that 'you can't just fly by the seat of your pants all the time.' This clearly reveals that she has started to take some ownership

of her client's business; has started to think about the success of the company, and is advising—at times almost admonishing—her client in an effort to ensure the success of the business. For Ellen the future success of the 'label' has become important to her, she wants to see her visual identity have every chance of success and she wants to help her client manage her new business in a way that makes that success a stronger possibility.



I invited Ellen to pick another card. She selected *problem*, and commented 'haven't I just mentioned four thousand of them?' and went on to say that there are always problems, but that doesn't mean it is all negative—since, she says 'I haven't worked on a design job without problems.' Ellen then says she's worried I might think that her experience of the job with the fashion designer friend has been bad, however, 'it's just part of the thing, overall I really loved working on this design job'.



Ellen chose another card. *Society*. She explained that she wasn't particularly 'cause' driven, but instead she sees the social aspect of someone walking into a shop that she's designed and getting something out of it, saying, 'that's the satisfaction for me in terms of society'.

This was the end of our interview. I met Ellen again two weeks later, she said her client had rung the previous Friday night and said that she needed a book designed for Monday. Ellen phrased this as exactly the sort of thing she had been speaking about previously; her client placing unreasonable timeframe demands on her and the project. Ellen had designed the book anyway and again reiterated that her client doesn't understand the

investment that Ellen makes in the work. She then asked me whether I thought she was too involved in the work. She also finds it difficult that she, as the designer, is invisible, saying ‘in making the client visible, the designer becomes invisible.’ Ellen feels that the quality of the work points to the client, not the designer:

*The labels that I meticulously insist on being correct indicate to someone that the clothes designer, and the shop, is high quality ... not that I am high quality.*

~

Ellen described a project in which she has worked closely with a client who was also her friend. While Ellen spoke at length about the difficulties this ‘friend and client’ relationship brought to the project, it is also possible to see that working with a friend—and the casualness it allowed—enabled Ellen to take on a high level of ownership of the project. Ellen stated that she chose to do the project because she felt that her client, as a friend, would allow her to have some control over her work. When it became clear that parts of the project were going to be unpaid Ellen told her client that it made her care even more about the quality of the work. It was clear during the interview that Ellen had become personally committed to the project; she was proud of the work, she was committed to strengthening the identity of her friend’s business and she was proud that her friend had managed to secure wholesale contracts—perhaps partially due to the design work. While Ellen talks about the difficulties of her relationship with her friend/client it is clear that together they have created and applied a visual identity that has helped her friend occupy her new role as successful fashion designer and owner of a successful fashion label.

It is possible to see ‘otherness’ at work in Ellen’s relationship with her friend/client. She and her friend/client work together, and negotiate their differences in knowledge and perception in order to create a visual identity to support her friend’s new career. A more traditional framing of this design situation would view Ellen’s role as simply that of a designer taking a brief from her client then using her ability as a communication designer in interpreting this brief and developing an appropriate outcome. Ellen’s description of her experience of the design process allows us to see that it is far more convoluted; Ellen is directly activated in her design responses by the otherness of her friend/client.

Difficulties arise during the design process that Ellen could not predict. Her first version of the visual identity suddenly has to change because the name of the fashion label has to change. Her friend works in a way Ellen describes as ‘go, go, go.’ Ellen prefers to have the time to reflect and refine her work. Ellen encounters these and other difficulties and has to negotiate other people’s desires, ideas and ways of working during every step of the project. She successfully negotiates these intersubjective interactions to design a visual

identity for her friend's fashion label. At its simplest, without the other there would be no point in Ellen doing the work—there would be no brief; there would be no fashion label to design. However as well as supplying the original impetus for the brief the other is active in the design situation in manifesting the final design outcomes. Ellen designs the visual identity through her engagement and negotiation with the reality and otherness of the situation rather than despite it. Although there are numerous frustrations, she has overall 'loved the work'. Her work is transformational because it negotiates with this otherness successfully, rather than negotiating around it. She stays with the difficulty and unpredictability and works with the situation to produce the work.

It can be hard to see the transformational nature of Ellen's work; once the work exists as artefact, for example a box of finished labels ready to be sewn on, it appears as though it has always existed. This shift in knowledge and 'what is' often happens without conscious recognition. In Ellen's case her friend was working in retail and wished to become a fashion designer. Her friend's long-term work developing her own abilities and designing the clothing for the label provide the foundation without which Ellen's work could not have been done. As Ellen's creates her friend's visual identity a transformational process takes place that changes her friend's shop into a fashion outlet, turns her business name into a label and assists her friend to become a fashion designer. These are propositional steps that can be accepted or rejected by the audience. That Ellen's design action has been accepted is evidenced by the label's wholesale orders.

I am not suggesting, by referring to Ellen's client as the other, that she is a particularly different person; rather she is other simply due to not being Ellen herself. In fact Ellen's client is fairly similar to Ellen in many ways—in age, sex and interests. What remains is the incommensurable aspects of any intersubjective event. Ellen's client provokes her as any person might; with different viewpoints, interpretations, skills, ways of working and experience. Likewise Ellen has the same provocational agency with her client.

Ellen responds to the brief—a better term might be 'situation'—using her skill as a designer to craft a visual identity, this propositional artefact is then responded to by her client and by the situation itself. This work is carried out in a negotiated terrain formed between herself, her client and the situation. Ellen is stimulated by the other of her client into designing the work that she does; this happens through the initial impetus for the work, as well as the tight deadlines and the compromises and difficulties that Ellen encounters as she works on the project. Without her client there would be no project. If Ellen, for some reason, embarked on the project on her own and without her client, she would have been able to stick with her original concept. Instead difficulties were placed upon the project and Ellen's work is forged through these constraints and differences of opinion. Without her client, and her client's nature as 'not self', Ellen would have nothing to 'react to'.

One might argue that it would have been possible for Ellen's client to develop her own visual identity. There are of course practical reasons why she would not; she is not a communication designer and, no doubt, spends all available time trying to ensure her new fashion label is a success. On the one hand, engaging the services of a designer enables Ellen's client to have someone with experience and know-how design her communicative material. On the other hand, from the perspective of this research, Ellen supplies far more than experience at communication design and an extra pair of hands; she acts in an interpretive way from a position of otherness to develop a robust and viable new fashion design label. Ellen and her client become engaged, from their own points of view, in an interpretational act of iterative refinement—a 'back and forth' hermeneutic activity—that acts heuristically (in that neither of them know where they are going to go together) to develop a new fashion design label in the market. During a later meeting Ellen described the way she now tries to understand her work:

*So, I now make a deliberate attempt to focus on the process rather than the work, or the end outcome. Because that end outcome is all too often ruined. I used to think about negotiating my way through an obstacle course, piloting my immaculate design, my perfect work, through a series of enemy obstacles, trying to avoid it being tainted ... now I try to think of this as a process in which the work is morphed into its final shape ... this is a more sustainable design practice. (19 March 2009)*

Here there is a tone of resignation in her words, suggesting that she has been forced into taking this view as a means of coming to terms with an unfortunate reality of practice. I would contend however that with this statement Ellen demonstrates a maturing understanding of her practice as a communication designer with *the other*.

Aided by the communication design process Ellen's friend/client *becomes* a fashion designer and the owner of a successful fashion label. Her own and other people's ontological understandings as to 'what is' are subtly shifted. In a sense she has not changed at all; she remains the same person, as skilled as she was previously, as committed to her practice as she was previously. Ellen's client was a trained fashion designer and had obviously spent years developing her work and establishing her opportunity to start her own label. However through the work she does with Ellen she is able to see herself, and her fashion label, become a reality. She is provided with the means by which she can take on the role of fashion designer and be seen in the broader community as that person. She can *see herself* occupying her new role and she will be required to fulfill this new role; the demands it places on her will come about as they would with any shift or claim. Ellen's client becomes the fashion designer and Ellen and the rest of her community is given the opportunity to accept her new state of being.

## Nathan and the Arabic cultural museum

*Note: Unless otherwise indicated the direct quotes from Nathan's interview come from an interview conducted between Nathan and myself, Neal Haslem, on 6 March 2009.*

Nathan brought a large interpretation design project to the interview. He was working on the project as part of a loose consortium of sole practitioners. The project involved the design of a museum in an Arab nation, to be housed in part of the old city on the outskirts of a major modern city. Approximately 200 original mud-brick buildings in the old city were to be restored or reconstructed by heritage architects in order to house the new museum. Nathan described his role as '2D/3D' however, saying 'we all conceptualise together, we don't break up ... until the end of the project.'

Nathan and his team were currently working to 'theme out' twelve buildings, with four or five rooms to each building. This involved designing layouts and plans for each room of the museum with guidelines as to the equipment required and indicative costing. Visitor flow had to be the reverse to that in English-speaking countries due to Arabic language running right to left rather than left to right. They had not yet reached the stage of designing any final work but were currently producing a detailed scoping of the project. The museum was to include 'interactive tables,' 'augmented-reality' viewing stations, three-dimensional projections and other examples of new technologies.

Nathan's work was to plan and design interpretative signage, showcases, seating and objects. He described his design for a 'reflective room' that involved an internally projected object displaying quotes from local poets. He also art directed Arabic calligraphy for a room devoted to the history of Arab racing horses and composed this calligraphy along with silhouettes of horses and captions into a large interpretative panel. Nathan included work from local artists, calligraphers and taxidermists in his interpretative design for the rooms.

A separate aspect of Nathan's work was the design of a visual system for the documents used to communicate his team's designs to the architects and to the client. The document's visual system needed to allow each party to easily trace the developments and amendments of the design. Nathan also had to estimate and specify the equipment that would be needed for each room of the museum.

The museum was to be housed in mud-brick buildings. Many of the walls are historically valuable and for this reason most of Nathan's interpretative panels are required to be free-standing. Another constraint upon his work was that many of the buildings could not be air-conditioned. Showcases in these rooms would need to be 'climate-conditioned'. Some buildings were being rebuilt; these would have air-conditioning and could house technology.

Nathan said that the main aim of the museum is to promote an understanding of the history of the Arab state to the younger generation:

*They've come to the conclusion that a lot of the young ... know nothing about their history ... a lot of teenagers aren't interested in their history ... and they want to tell the story of how [the state] became a fundamentalist state ...*

Nathan described that his team designed the museum to tell

*the stories that needed to be told ... because they wanted stories ... a lot of their visitation data came back that even 14 and 15 year old boys read everything. As a nation of people they're readers ... they're highly academic ... and it's not uncommon for them to take school groups in and they will read everything ... they're not gleaners, or skimmers, they're readers ...*

In order to tell these stories his team has been through a number of meetings and presentations with the client to see whether what they were planning was 'appropriate'. Nathan said they received feedback 'not to talk about Islam, that's not the purpose of the site ... the purpose of the site is to tell the history'. Nathan's team researched the history, wrote an interpretative narrative and had this translated into Arabic. This text was then sent to the client for approval.

Nathan said that one aspect of the job he found difficult was to know what they were and were not allowed to refer to in the museum because of religious and cultural constraints. They were allowed to quote from certain sections of the Quran but not others. Major interpretative panels, which might have a large group of people gathering around them, could not face Mecca. One room had a series of screens that described how the heads of state were situated in society but the client asked them to revise their design to de-emphasise the hierarchical nature of the society.

I asked Nathan why the client wanted to work with a non-Islamic design team when they were designing a museum for an Islamic people:

*They made it clear that they preferred to work with either English, Canadian or Australian people because of our track record with heritage interpretation ... and they felt that we were among the three top interpreters in the world and the most sensitive ...*





I then asked Nathan to choose one of the prompt cards at random and he picked *negotiation*. He said the only negotiation he saw was the *lack* of negotiation involved in the financial aspect of the project, because of the nature of the consortium.

In terms of the negotiation of the work itself he said that the client had always had a strong respect for his team's professionalism and therefore understood that the work his team produced was appropriate. For Nathan this was '[a] luxurious position to be in ... and it works, when you are left to what you do best, it works incredibly well'.

When asked about the religious and cultural differences Nathan agreed that there was some 'bartering', around which parts of the history they were permitted to tell:

*We'll tell this if we can leave out that' ... so really there were very few problems ... I don't think about that word [negotiation] much other than when it comes to financial transactions ... It's not the way I traditionally work, that's why I don't think about it.*

I then said to Nathan that I thought that the discussion about how his team could use the Quran might be seen as a negotiation between two parties. Nathan answered, 'yes, an agreement... but that was one of the few times ... there were very few disagreements'.

He later said that there were probably negotiations in terms of language:

*We have 'yes and no' and they have 'yes, yes and yes'.*

In these cases Nathan's team needed guidance through the subtleties of his client's use of language, so that they could tell when 'yes' meant 'no'; Nathan stated 'and even when we seemed to have an open discussion, it wasn't an open discussion, it was the client telling us to do something'.

Nathan said they didn't really have discussions with the client. When the client made a suggestion, it might have sounded like a suggestion but it was actually absolute:

*You will do this ... no negotiation whatsoever*



Nathan then chose another card at random, this time choosing *expression*. For Nathan this word summed up interpretation design, from language through to the way the story is told:

*Interpretation is really the expression of story telling ... The way that the story is expressed is vital to the site, and being a living museum there's no corner of the [museum] precinct where expression isn't considered*

Nathan stated a number of times that he and his team base their practice on story-telling and described how his team's interpretation design starts with the creation of an holistic story which threads together the different artefacts and information on display. He compares this to exhibition design in which each object simply tells its own story. In these exhibitions, Nathan says, there is no aim for a holistic narrative that continues throughout the whole museum/exhibition:

*Interpretation starts with words and the story and then the design feeds off that, not the other way around, it's not 'form first'*



The next card Nathan turned over was *learn* and he started by stating that the project was all about the visitors learning:

*The outcome is driven towards educating people, visitors will learn, they will possibly be entertained, they will possibly be provoked, but in this case it was it was very much a learning response of telling history*

When prompted Nathan agreed that he learnt from the process as well:

*I've learnt how architects think ... a really good design project you actually learn heaps from it but you don't go out to learn from it, you start out to contribute, and in that you learn.*

I then asked Nathan directly whether he thought his client had learnt anything during the project or had always 'known'. Nathan responded that they didn't really teach the client anything since the client had done a lot of research; however he said some of the books his team found in Melbourne actually allowed Nathan and his team to fill in gaps in the State's history and correct the client on some of their timelines. At this point our interview ended.

~

Nathan described a project in which he has worked closely with a client who—as representatives of an Arab nation—wished to create a representation of the 'story' of their nation. Nathan and his team have had to negotiate obvious cultural differences during their project.

Although Nathan interprets the card *negotiation* as referring to the financial aspects of his project, when prompted he responds with some telling descriptions of his team's relationship with their client. They had to learn to tell the difference between when 'yes' meant yes and when 'yes' meant no. They also found that when the client made a 'suggestion' it was not a suggestion but was an 'absolute' direction. Nathan and his team acted as external agents to comprehend who their client was, what their client wanted to say and then told it back to them. Their client was presented with their own story—based on history—presented back to them 'through the eyes' of another. Nathan and his team engaged in a hermeneutic process with a foreign culture, 'discovering' the story they wanted to tell. When they presented this 'story' back to the client, most of it was accepted but occasionally it was rejected when the 'story' transgressed cultural mores or accepted understandings. I would argue that Nathan and his team's position as outsiders—as *the other*—to their clients, put them in an excellent position to hermeneutically 'come to know' the story of their client. The client could then vet this 'story' for any particularly problematic elements.

With Nathan's project, as with the interpretation of the *visual identity project* in the last chapter, we can refer to Bakhtin's theory that it is, 'immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside ... in time, in space, in culture' (Bakhtin 1986 [1979], p. 6) as well as Gadamer's description of the 'ability to go beyond one's own possibilities, precisely in a dialogical, communicative, hermeneutic process' (Gadamer 2000, p. 285). Although he does not openly state it, and possibly would never frame his practice in these terms, Nathan's description of his project supports the presence of these aspects—and critical role of *the other*—in communication design practice.

According to Nathan, his client's aim was to tell the 'story' of their nation to young Arabs. The museum was not for visitors or tourists, but to educate its young citizens in the history of their nation in an effort to counteract the threat posed by shopping malls stocked with globalised homogenised brands. This exercise in the education of national cultural identity was achieved by commissioning a—culturally *other*—team of interpretation design specialists.

As *the other*, Nathan's team is able to tell their client's own story back to them. The clients are then able to re-apprehend their own reality through this story, re-constructed—at the cost of many millions—from the ruins of their old city. Young Arabs are able to come to an understanding of what it means to be an Arab for the museum is as much about knowledge—and the historical facts of the nation—as it is about *being an Arab* and what it means to *be an Arab*. Nathan and his team are engaged in an ontologically generative action through design; their design action brings about the ability to comprehend 'what-is' in a new way. The museum, as designed artefact, enters the world as concrete (or mud-brick) evidence of—and ambassador for—this new reality.

## Derek and the holiday house

*Note: Unless otherwise indicated the direct quotes from Derek's interview come from an interview conducted between Derek and myself, Neal Haslem, on 3 April 2009.*

Derek brought to his interview a brochure design for a luxury holiday house on an island in the Great Barrier Reef. He had already designed a visual identity and a website; the brochure was a current project.

Derek's client had recently engaged a public relations company who had recommended sending out a brochure as a marketing strategy. Derek had earlier put the owner in touch with the public relations company, after advising them that they needed to be careful about the way they handled promotion. He had recommended that his client didn't use a 'hard-core traditional advertising agency', but that a public relations company would promote the property in the correct way. Derek felt that the property could best be promoted in Condé Nast 'Traveller' magazine and similar luxury travel magazines. He based this understanding on the initial discussions he had with his client about the project. He made recommendations for the best way his client could promote their property to the desired target market and to develop and support a brand that would match their target market:

*I'm not trained, in any marketing sense, but I've got instincts that lead me.*

Derek developed his visual identity for the property before he visited in person. He used photographs of the property along with discussions with the client to understand the vision for the property and designed the visual identity with this vision in mind. Since designing the visual identity, he had traveled to the property to art direct a new series of photographs for use in the website and brochure.

Derek's client is the builder of the property as well as the owner. Derek said that his client had a good idea of the tone and style that should be used to promote the property and situate the brand in the correct market:

*[He knows] who it's aimed at and what sort of a "vibe" he wants people to get from it ... and he's good at explaining that, which is a rare thing ... and so his instincts are quite good too ... and maybe I was quite good at understanding what he was on about, because I got it right.*

This was the first project Derek worked on with this client; however he has since worked on other property development projects with the same client. The holiday house is unique in that it is a small development personally undertaken by the client. The other property development projects are generally larger apartment developments in urban environments.

The photographs Derek looked at in order to develop his visual identity were taken when the property was almost finished. His client used the photographs to brief Derek on his vision for the property. Derek said his client had stayed at some other resorts and was able to point out the aspects he thinks are important. His client is, says Derek, ‘big on service’. He wants to provide services, such as sending out calendars to people who have stayed, as part of this level of service:

*He pitches himself as someone who goes further than other [property] developers would ... he realises the value of reputation.*

Derek works quite personally with the client, and likes working with him. Derek says he understands the client, and the client understands him. He says it wouldn’t matter if his client was not the owner of the property development company, he would still get along with him well; the understanding they have is based on the type of person they are, not on the fact that his client owns the company. He also said that it does make it easier that his client is ‘the one that’s making the final decisions ... there’s less bureaucracy’. During this project Derek’s main contacts were the owner of the property development company (and builder of the luxury holiday house) and the owner’s daughter. Derek does a lot of the work with the daughter but ‘[the father] is always there at the decision-making time’. Derek was also working with a web designer and printer in order to produce his designs. He was in the process of sourcing distinctive packaging for the brochure that would support the ‘luxury’ image and finding a quality printer to print and produce it at the time we spoke.

Derek told me that ‘there’s a lot riding on the quality of the printing’. For this reason he wants to be able to do ‘press checks’ as each section of the brochure is printed to ensure that a high level of finish is maintained. He is also planning to use quite complicated and expensive printing techniques including special stocks, difficult folding and the use of ‘special colours’. The term ‘special colour’ is used by printers to denote additional colours included in four colour process offset printing beyond the standard cyan, yellow, magenta and black. Special colours are printed using ink mixed to the exact colour specified, giving them a vibrancy and density that four colour process cannot produce.

During the photographic shoot Derek travelled to the property with the photographer. The client was also at the property. Derek told me that his client had made Derek and the photographer sandwiches for lunch during the shoot ‘which was nice ... you don’t usually get that from a client’. For Derek this event was an example that demonstrated the personal level of the client’s involvement in the project and his personal relationship with Derek and the photographer. For Derek:

*It makes it much more enjoyable ... if you like the people that you’re doing stuff with ... he trusts me in what I do, which is good... he also likes the “argy-bargy”... I see myself more as a “vehicle”... but I’ve got my interpretation of what he says.*

As we talked more about his relationship with the client and what Derek brought to that relationship, Derek described himself as a ‘tool’ or a ‘vehicle’. I was interested in hearing more about this and I prompted him by saying that it wasn’t as if he was a ‘drafting board’. He responded:

*I guess it’s become so a part of what I do that I don’t think about it ... I’m a tool through which ... I use my skills to communicate values and a style that the client wants to ... like a Swiss-army knife ... maybe it’s got to do with the way that we get along*

I asked Derek whether he thought that the visual identity he had designed had changed his client’s sense of what the property was. In asking this I was interested to know whether Derek saw, as I did, the ‘transformational’ action of his work; that his role was more than just as a ‘tool for communication’ and was also active in changing understandings of what the property was, with the owner of the property as well as with the target market. Derek agreed:

*yes I do ... I’m sure that it has made him proud ... of what he’s built.*

For Derek an important aspect that allows this change is the photography he art directed which is now included in the website and the brochure and shows the property ‘at its best’:

*I think the [visual] identity is the same as a photograph, making [the property] look good ... the identity just reinforces that’.*

I asked Derek whether making the property ‘look good’ allowed his client to see the property in a different way. Derek said ‘I guess so ... his experience of the place has been changing since the first foundation was laid and this is part of that’. Derek agreed that his client’s understanding of the property has changed due to the work Derek and the photographer have done but he says it also changed when he watched ‘the water move from the spa into the pool’ for the first time.

I then asked ‘what did you bring to the project, other than your technical skills as a designer?’ and followed this with the apology that; ‘it’s a totally leading question’. I tell him that I’m interested in understanding whether it is important that Derek is *not the same person* as his client. Derek responds with, ‘I’m good at what I do and he’s good at what he does’. He tells me how the daughter and mother of his client have both said to him that they ‘don’t know how you come up with this’. He says, ‘my response to them is just that ‘it’s what I do, that it’s what I know how to do’.



I ask Derek to pick one of my prompt cards at random. He picks *teach*. He says that teaching is very relevant to this project—he has taught his client about a lot of the technical print aspects and also ‘how to come up with ideas’. However Derek says that ‘teach’ is not the right word for what his *client* has done. His client’s actions would be better described as ‘imparting knowledge’; his client is ‘not teaching ... he’s telling’.

Derek says that they have been on building sites together and he has noticed his client pick out aspects of the site that he himself would not notice, things about a feature of the foundations for example. Derek feels that his client is more observant than many people and that he picks out details of Derek’s work with the same acuity:

*He’s different in a lot of ways [from other clients] because he does have good sensibilities.*

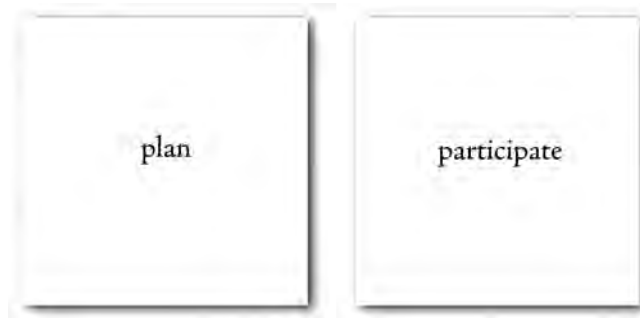
Derek cites an occasion where his client asked him to try a different version of the visual identity. Derek put together the requested alternative, showed the client and explained why it wasn’t as good as the original. His client could see the points Derek was making about the new version and agreed with him. In the past Derek has had other clients that have not been able to understand the visual judgements he makes. A few times during our discussion Derek had remarked that his client trusts him and trusts his ability.

Derek also talked about how, although his client is not ‘his uncle’ or a member of his family, it sometimes feels that way, and that is an unusual thing with a client. In relation to his ability to get to know his clients better as a sole practitioner Derek says, ‘yes, he knows me better than he would if I was in a big company ... but it gets down to what sort of person he is and what sort of person I am’.

Derek feels like the work he does ‘teaches’, in that it ‘is part of the experience’, although he says that ‘I think a lot of people don’t understand ... and there’s always that thing of *what does a graphic designer do?*, and [yet] it’s all around us’. He thinks that most people don’t have a sense that someone has designed all the materials that they see around them. He says ‘the menu, the mineral water ... they don’t realise that someone’s *done* it’.



I ask does Derek's work 'teach' people how to see this property? He says he doesn't know if 'teach' is the right word, saying it might 'change people's idea of what it is, or can be.' Is that important? I ask, 'Definitely,' he answers, 'that's why I've got a job.'



The next card he picks is *plan*. He feels this isn't relevant and he picks another card, *participate*. We both agree that we've already talked a lot about how participation has been part of the project.

Derek later said that his client only realised that he would need to provide a full-time host for the property once it started to become a luxury guesthouse. In other words Derek's design work enabled the property to become in reality what his client had imagined. Once it started to become his client's vision, and could be experienced as a reality, the newly 'realised' property placed new demands back on his client based on that new reality. In a sense the property itself was altered to become a new property with a new agency; while the aim of this altered agency was its effect on the target market it also affected his client and, I would argue, Derek himself.

~

Derek's project was similar to Ellen's. Fundamentally it was a *visual identity project* with an individual other. Derek helped transform an expensive construction of bricks and mortar into luxurious guest accommodation. In so doing he has allowed his client to move from a concept and a building towards a new reality.

Derek listened to his client, took on his client's future aspiration for the property and helped make it a reality through the visual identity, website and brochure. At one point in the interview Derek described himself as a 'tool'—that his client uses him to achieve his communication objectives, like he might hammer home a nail. However, Derek is not an inanimate tool, his client does not extend himself into the world directly through the agency given to him by commissioning Derek. On the one hand Derek is able to do this work for his client because he is an experienced communication designer with a high level

of experience and a good relationship with his client, on the other hand it is because he is 'other'. He is not his client. He sees his client's dream house from his own perspective and is able to translate his client's subjective concept into a form that is communicable to and appropriate for, others. Derek uses his interpretative faculties in an intersubjective engagement with his client, and the project at hand. As his client's daughter said to him, we 'don't know how you come up with this'. His clients cannot see what Derek sees; they do not know what he knows. Although he sees himself as a 'tool', takes all his cues from his client and bases much of his understanding of the project on his opinion that he and his client 'understand one another', Derek produces design artefacts which articulate the reality of the building in a way that his clients could not have envisioned without him.

Derek says he knows he is a 'good designer'. He knows he has the skills and 'mind-set' to do the job as well as it can be done. He feels confident he can help his client achieve the 'style' and connect with the 'market' they wish to. Just before our interview finished Derek says he can relate to my description of design as a 'realisation' and, although he never says it, it is clear that his work enables his client to change who *he is* as well as changing what the building is. Derek brings about a change in reality that instantiates a luxury holiday house on a Great Barrier Reef island. His design work allows this reality to be communicated to his client, the target market, the broader world and to himself. His work allows an ontological shift to take place.

It is telling that Derek's client realised that he would need to employ a full-time host only once the visual identity and the website were finished. As the client's *concept* of luxury holiday house became *reality* it brought its own requirements, which the client, as a newly instantiated owner of luxury accommodation, needed to fulfill. As a newly envisioned reality the luxury house has its own agency and started to design the world around it.

## CONCLUSION

All three practitioners I spoke to have different practices, different relationships with their clients and different ways of articulating their practice. None of the practitioners I spoke with mentioned *the other* or framed the intersubjective relationships they formed during their practice as critical. They did not view their practice as either one of knowledge production, or as related to their client's or their own being. However, I would argue that each interview reveals a critical role for *the other* in practice and can be interpreted as an example of communication design's epistemological and ontological agency.

Ellen, Nathan and Derek, together with their clients, enable changes in *knowledge* and *being* through their communication design work. Communication design can transform reality; reifying the conceptual, the unknown and unformed through the action of design. Once made material, the concept becomes real and the people involved in the project are brought into a new reality with the new design artefacts.

A text which has helped my interpretation of the *practitioner interview project* is Martin Heidegger's well known essay *The Question Concerning Technology*—originally delivered as a lecture in 1954—in which he examines a silver chalice. Heidegger problematises the conventional view of technology as purely instrumentalist and demonstrates instead that in *technē* there is a *revealing*:

*Thus what is decisive in technē does not lie at all lie in making and manipulating, nor in the using of means, but rather in the revealing mentioned before. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that technē is a bringing-forth ... Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where alētheia, truth, happens* (Heidegger 2008 [1954], p. 319).

Beyond a materialisation of concept there is an aspect in the making of work, in the *technē*, which reveals that which was not known or available to knowledge previously. Communication designers, along with all makers, have Heidegger's 'bringing-forth' capacity. Communication design is a way of knowing and a 'way of revealing'; what Heidegger terms as *alētheuein* or truth. Thus communication design goes beyond the capacity for the instrumental to the capacity for bringing-forth truth. Ellen, Nathan and Derek's example projects all exhibit the quality Heidegger calls 'being-uncovering' (*entdeckend-sein*) (Heidegger 2009 [1931], p. 261). Each of the example projects discussed in some way materialised new knowledge, enabled changes of being and uncovered new truth.

The design theorist Clive Dilnot suggests similar connections between design and being in a recent essay on ethics:

*Design is entering a new phase. What has previously been implicit—namely its ontological function, its role in projecting models of being through how it helps project models of how we are in relation to artifice—now becomes central and explicit. This would suggest that, in this new setting, the very substance of design is ontological, that the ethical address that design makes is therefore, at its deepest, towards models of being (Dilnot 2005, p. 42)*

Dilnot's essay, and the concepts he presents within it, support the interpretation of the practice of communication design as having the capacity to propose new ways of being.

To refer to Derek's example project: the material artefacts produced during his communication design activity—business cards, flyers, websites, posters—are not the only things that appear or change due to the design activity. When Derek designs a visual identity for a new building on a Great Barrier Reef island, art-directs a series of photographs and designs a brochure, a number of things occur.

Derek's brochure itself has agency, it communicates the existence of the property. It also communicates specific information about that property—that it is by the sea; that it is on an island in the sub-tropics; that it appears incredibly luxurious; that it is available to hire for a week or a weekend for a large amount of money; and that it is very white and a bit modernist. The brochure's intended target market is monied style-conscious travellers ready to be tempted to take an indulgent week off in a beautiful getaway. The brochure communicates with other audiences as well—the property owner himself, who happens to also be the builder; the designer himself who performs the hermeneutic action whereby the understanding of this physical building is transformed from a physical building into an exclusive weekend getaway; and the broader community, who might never go to such a place but come to understand that it exists and that people exist who do stay in such luxury.

Knowledge is produced by these acts. To some what was once unknown comes to be known (the existence of the luxury holiday house). To those who already had knowledge of the house that knowledge becomes changed. The builder already knew how the water from the spa spills into the swimming pool; he comes to know that he is owner and creator of a luxury weekender.

In the same moment that this new knowledge is produced, new realities are produced—'what is' shifts as the new knowledge comes to be understood. The building as an artefact doesn't change its physical, or ontic, properties but nevertheless it changes our understanding of 'what is' as it becomes a luxury getaway. The builder himself changes his ontological understanding to become the creator and owner of a luxury weekender. The target audience is given the potential to understand themselves anew as the people who occupy such luxury. People who are not in the target market and who could not afford, or wish to, stay in such accommodation are given an awareness of the existence

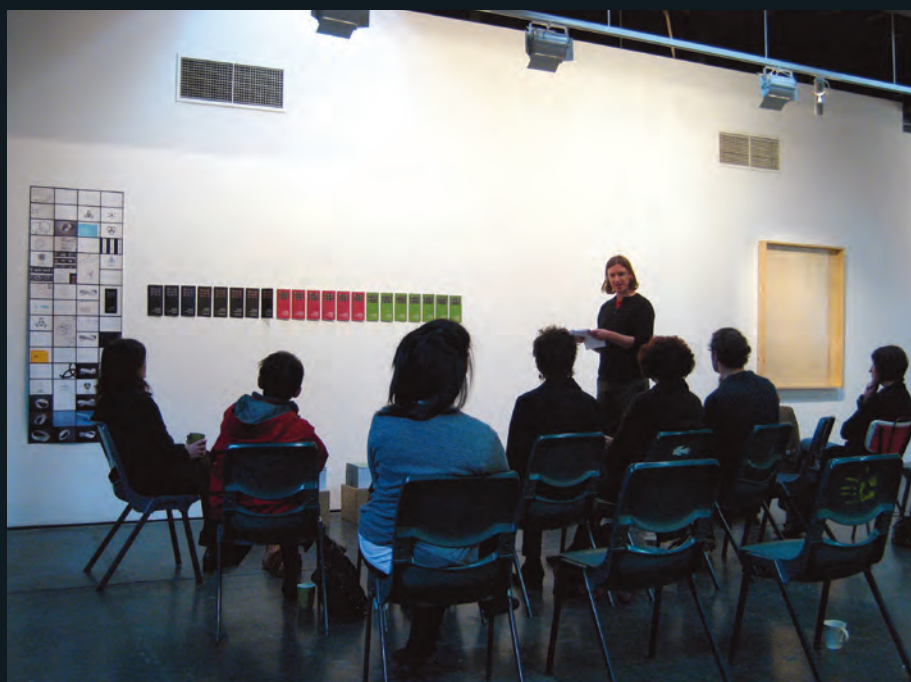
of the property and the brochure. They become aware that there are people who stay in this sort of luxury, can imagine what it might be like and can alter their perception of themselves, and others, in relation to that understanding.

Thus a material change leads to an epistemological change leads to an ontological change, all taking place at the same moment, through the same activity: communication design, being and *the other*.

This chapter has examined the *practitioner interviews project* to reveal observations and understandings in relation to communication design, being and *the other*. It has extended the previous two chapters, *making: identifying the other* and *knowing: the other reflected*, to reveal the agency of communication design, not just to make artefact and manifest new knowledge, but to manifest new ways of being. In the next chapter *being-with: the other in dialogue* I will analyse the *client discussion project*. The *client discussion project* is based around a discussion I arranged between myself and some of my long-term clients. During this discussion I expressed some of the understandings that I was starting to draw out from this research. The chapter will reflect on the *client discussion project* and analyse the key understandings that this research project, as a whole, has developed.



CHAPTER FIVE  
**BEING-WITH: *THE OTHER* IN DIALOGUE**







## INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five, *being-with: the other in dialogue* reflects on the *client discussion project* to discuss communication design, being-with and *the other*. The previous three chapters have each described one of the projects forming the methods of this research. Those chapters discuss how the project they describe has revealed observations and understandings extending from my research concerns. In Chapter Two I make an argument for the negotiated nature and heuristic process of communication design achieved through communication and artefact materialisation with *the other*. In Chapter Three I suggest a framing of communication design as a reflective knowledge production activity in which participants instantiate new knowledge through intersubjective negotiation with *the other*. In Chapter Four I make an argument for communication design as an ontologically generative act for the participants, again initiated through negotiation with *the other*. Extending from these chapters, and in summation to them, this chapter describes a project in which I took the nascent observations and understandings that I had started to develop through the earlier projects, and presented them for discussion to a group of long term clients. Through reflection on the *client discussion project* I make an argument for communication design practice as a practice of *being-with*. My argument mirrors a turn articulated by Emmanuel Levinas, when he critiqued the work of Martin Heidegger and proposed that it is a relation with *the other* which allows being to happen. I apply Levinas' work to communication design practice, to articulate a shift from Willis' *ontological designing* and Schön's *reflective practice*, to a practice in which *the other* brings us to being and, in so doing, brings us to practice.



**figure 5.1** *Invitation to the exhibition What Makes This Poem Beautiful? at the Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, 29 May – 27 June 2009.*

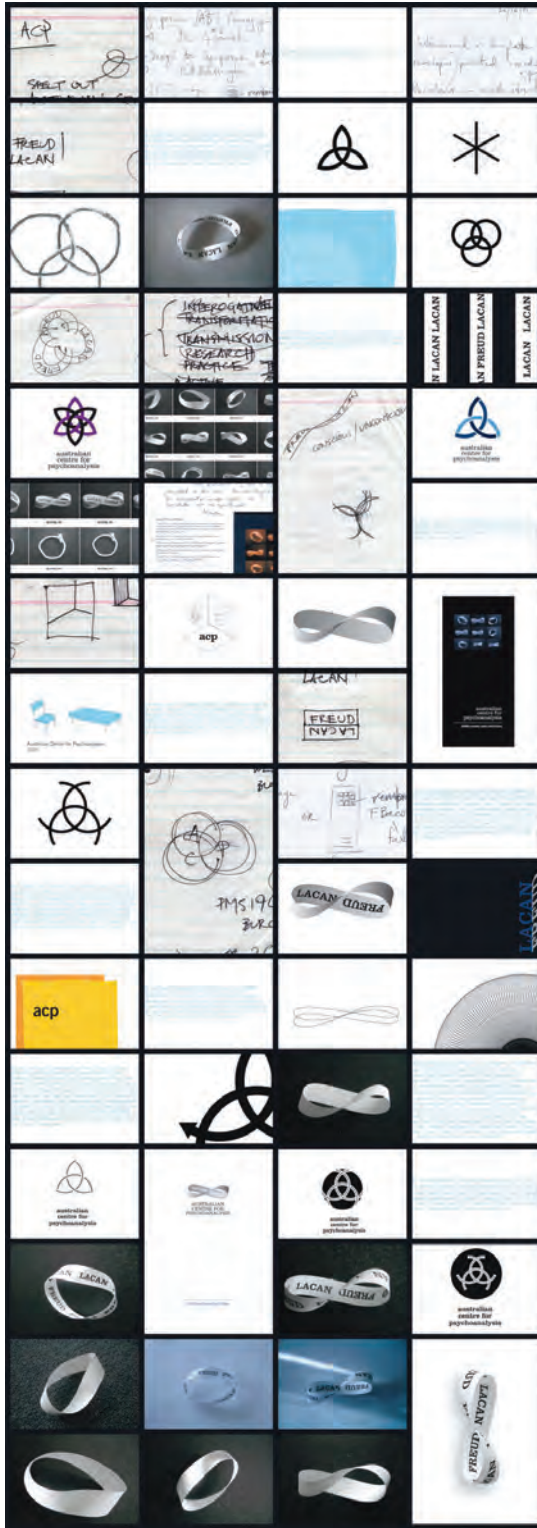


figure 5.2 The poster exhibited alongside printed flyers, journals and stationery for the client discussion project.

In early 2009 I was invited to participate in an exhibition curated by Lizzy Newman entitled *What Makes This Poem Beautiful?* at the Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne (*figure 5.1*). Lizzy is a personal friend as well as one of my clients through her membership of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis (ACP). Lizzy asked me to design a brochure for the ACP in 2004 and I have worked as the ACP's communication designer since that time. The Margaret Lawrence Gallery asked Lizzy, as guest curator, to organise an exhibition about 'her community'. Lizzy asked me, along with other friends and colleagues, whether I would exhibit something about my practice and include some of the work I had done for the ACP. The exhibit I created, and the discussion I arranged to take place in front of that exhibit, form the last project for this research; the *client discussion project*.

The exhibition presented me with an opportunity to consolidate this research investigation. By the time I came to hang my exhibit I had already completed projects that investigated my own practice (*visual identity project*), student designer's practices (*student mirror project*) and other communication design practitioner's practices (*practitioner interviews project*). Lizzy's invitation provided me with an opportunity to 'test' the understandings emerging from my first three projects with a group of established communication design clients.

Over the last five years, I had completed almost forty projects with the ACP. These communication design projects produced artefacts ranging from small flyers and magazine adverts through to a new visual identity and a redesign of the Centre's journal *analysis*. During the *client discussion project* I was in the process of redesigning the ACP website. For Lizzy's *What Makes This Poem Beautiful?* exhibition (*Margaret Lawrence Gallery 2009*) I displayed a selection of the work I had done for the ACP over the previous five years. I also designed a poster specifically for the exhibition.

The poster documented the process work from the development of the ACP's visual identity in order to incorporate traces of the process of communication design into my exhibit (*figure 5.2*). The ACP's visual identity was one of my first projects with the Centre, occurring over a number of months in 2004. It involved numerous iterations and a number of discussions with various members of the Centre before the final outcome was found. I had stored most of the visual material produced during this design process and I also had copies of the various emails that had been received and sent. I composed this material into a large format poster with which I aimed to trigger memories of the process and the different directions we had considered before deciding on the visual identity now in use.

# analysis

On Difference

No. 15, 2009



## ON DIFFERENCE

**Esther Faye**

"A Solid Hatred Addressed to Being"

**Dany Nobus**

Perversion as Symptom: On Defining the Sexuality of the Other

**Daphne & Nestor Tamarin**

"Who am I as a sexual being?" A Psychotic Attempt at the Hysterical Enigma

**Juliet Rogers**

"I love you...I mutilate you": The Capture of Flesh and the Word in 'Female Genital Mutilation' Law

## THE BODY AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

**Susan Schwartz**

Introduction to the Xth Lacan Symposium: The Body and the Unconscious

**Leonardo S. Rodríguez**

Body Parts

**Chantal Degril**

Cynicism and Jouissance in Contemporary Symptoms

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**Jacques Adam**

The Trauma of Birth: A "Parasite Myth" of Psychoanalysis

**Jean-Paul Baldacchino**

Dreams in Child Analysis: Winnicott's Piggie and Dreams as Symptoms in a Lacanian Clinic

**Patricia Gherovici**

Lacan's Hysterisation of Psychoanalysis: from Simulation to Stimulation

**Yehuda Israely**

The Logic and Topology of the Other Jouissance

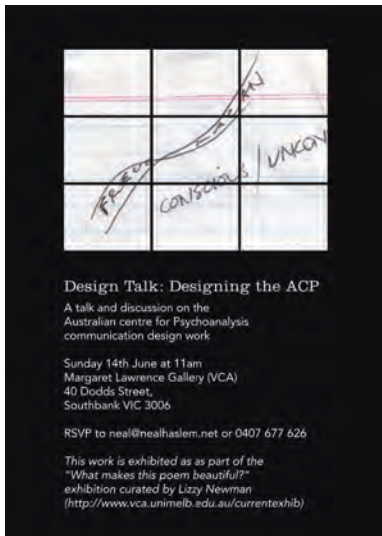
**Lucille Holmes**

Collapsing Knowledge: Art Education and the Epistemology of Psychoanalysis

plus *In Passing*, *Reviews* and *In Memorium*

australian  
centre for  
psychoanalysis

figure 5.3 The final ACP visual identity, as applied to the Centre's journal analysis.



**figure 5.4** Email card sent out to members of the ACP, inviting them to attend the client discussion.

I hoped that the exhibit, as well as answering Lizzy's exhibition brief, would provide a stage upon which I could conduct the *client discussion project*. I wanted to provoke a memory of the ACP from the period before I started working with them, so that the visual identity of the Centre from this time could be compared to its identity in 2009, when my exhibit was staged. I also wanted to demonstrate how that identity had been applied to numerous artefacts during the last five years (*figure 5.3*). I aimed to set the stage for a discussion enquiring into *what* my action of communication design had achieved during the last five years as well as *how* and *why* it had achieved what it had.

After consulting with Lizzy and the gallery about my aims for the discussion/event I prepared an email invitation (*figure 5.4*) and asked for it to be forwarded to all the ACP members. A number of members responded that they would be available to take part in the discussion.

My first observation was that exhibiting the work was also a revealing process for me. I had not seen all the ACP work displayed together before. Mounting the work side by side in the gallery demonstrated the consistency of the Centre's identity. I used repetition in my display of the work to emphasise this visual consistency, demonstrating the way the ACP's identity appeared across all the work; stationery, journals, flyers.





*figure 5.5* ACP brochures mounted side-by-side as part of my exhibit for the What Makes This Poem Beautiful? exhibition.



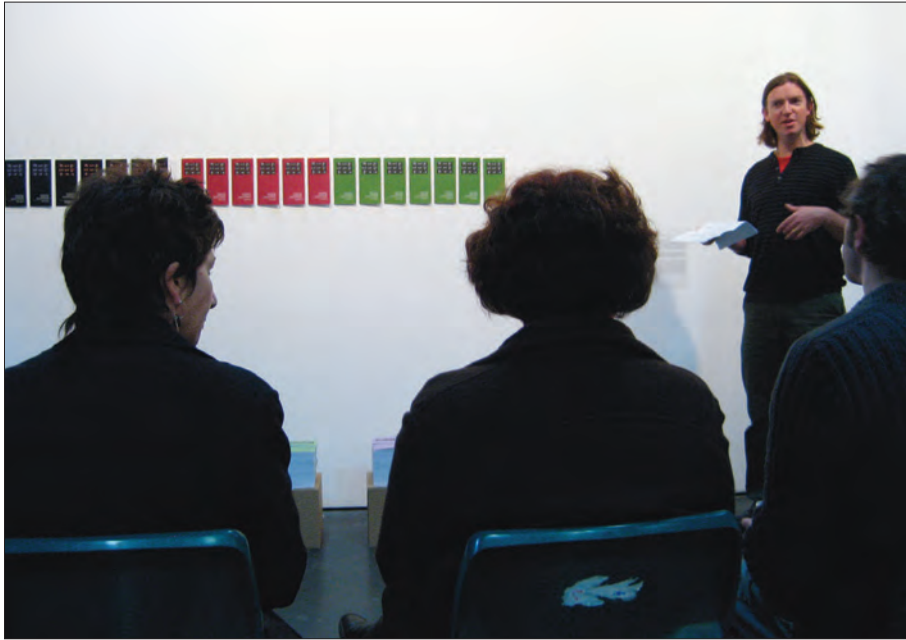
*figure 5.6* ACP journals and stationery displayed as part of my exhibit for the What Makes This Poem Beautiful? exhibition.

It was a surprisingly reflexive activity for me to sort through the ACP's work and mount it side-by-side on the wall and on the floor beneath (*figures 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7*). It became clear that we had given the Centre a strong visual identity over the years. I felt somewhat taken aback by the highly repetitive and rigid nature of this identity, revealed when multiple artefacts were displayed together. I wondered what effect the visual identity had—whether it had altered internal or external perceptions of the Centre and whether they were bored by it and needed a change. Perhaps it was too rigid and I had encased the Centre in a seamless and controlling visual language. I have often found myself confronted by rigid visual standards and I was somewhat worried I had created another example.



**figure 5.7** *The exhibit of ACP communication design work I prepared for the What Makes This Poem Beautiful? exhibition.*

It's unusual to display communication design artefacts in a gallery, especially the kind of everyday work I chose to display from my commissions from the ACP. When communication design is displayed in a gallery it is more often in the form of artefacts responding to a specific call. The work I displayed included a letterhead and envelope, flyers for past events and other examples of functional unglamorous communication design. This was a deliberate move on my part, as I wanted to present an exhibit that demonstrated the extent of—and holistic quality of—the Centre's communication design material over the last five years. I aimed to display it in as straightforward a manner as possible, as I wanted the exhibit to be an *accounting* of the visual artefacts that had composed the artefactual public face of the ACP over the last five years rather than a *promotion*.



*figure 5.8* ACP members in front of the exhibit listening to my opening pre-amble for the discussion.

Eight members of the ACP responded to my invitation and attended the gallery on the morning of Saturday 14 June 2009. I provided morning tea and everyone had a chance to inspect the exhibit closely before we started the discussion. I arranged chairs in front of the exhibit so the members could sit facing the ACP communication design work (*figure 5.8*).

I introduced the discussion by reading out a pre-amble introducing the interests of my research. I showed the group one of the original ACP flyers, produced internally by one of the members before I had started working with them—typeset in Microsoft Word and printed on an A4 sheet of paper. I then pointed out one of the flyers I had produced for the ACP and asked the group:

*I wonder about the difference between these two things, and I wonder where the difference comes from, what the difference can tell us about the work a graphic designer does, and what employing a graphic designer achieves.*

I wished to present, provisionally, the understandings that had started to extend from my research. I hoped firstly to find out whether this group of clients recognised these understandings and secondly to discuss the understandings with them. During other projects I had made a deliberate effort not to reveal the specific concerns of my research beyond stating I was interested in investigating communication design practice. In contrast during the *client discussion project* I stated my understandings in a pre-amble. I did this by introducing three terms indicating the aspects of communication design practice I had begun to understand were activated through



intersubjective action. I used the terms *difference*, *not-knowing* and *interpretation*.

I used the term *difference* to avoid using the term *the other*. The members of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis are *Lacanian* analysts, their practice is derived from the French psychoanalyst and philosopher Jacques Lacan. Lacan built his work upon Sigmund Freud's pioneering psychoanalytic theories developed in the early twentieth century. However, in contrast to Freud, Lacan's underlying principle is that the human psyche is 'structured like a language'. In order to help develop this principle and construct his psychoanalytic theory he refers to early linguistic and semiotic research by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ferdinand de Saussure (Žižek 2009). Consequently, for Lacanian's, particular words have very specific meanings and are keys to the work they do—the interpretations they make—with their analysands (analytic terminology for clients). The *imaginary*, the *symbolic* and the *real* are three different levels Lacan argues constitute reality, and have meanings specific to Lacanian psychoanalysis (Lacan 1998 [1973]). *The other* is also a fundamental term used by Lacanians in their description of the human psyche. Lacan defines two types of other: the imaginary other—*objet petit a*—and the symbolic Other—*grand Autre*.

In making preparations for the *client discussion project* I feared that if I used the term 'the other' then we would not be able to discuss the aspects of practice that I wished to. The way I use the term *the other* within my own research has been discussed previously in the Chapter One, *introduction*. To briefly reiterate here, I use *the other* to refer to the otherness of the participants in the design process *as individual subjects*, and the incommensurable otherness that the intersubjective practice of communication design initiates, provokes and negotiates. The additional keywords I used in my preamble, *not-knowing* and *interpretation*, were derived from my understanding of the role of *the other* and the agency I was coming to attribute to *the other* in the practice of communication design.

I was aware that there was a distinct risk that—in speaking to the Centre's members using concepts about which they already had highly theorised understandings—our discussion would flounder due to difficulties with terminology and lack of understanding. Nevertheless I felt that the discussion was an important opportunity for my research project as a whole and one I didn't want to pass up.

I had already decided that I did not want to apply a Lacanian theoretical framework to my research, and it was not *as Lacanians* that I invited the members of the ACP to the discussion. I wished to speak to the ACP members in their capacity as long-term clients, rather than as analysts. I also thought it likely that the reflexivity the members of the ACP demonstrated in their psychoanalytic practice would enable them to engage with my research concerns and ensure a thoughtful participation in the discussion. My hope was well founded; I was rewarded by the interest they showed and the familiarity they demonstrated with the reflexive nature of my research—if not the terminology I was using.

Following my pre-amble I posed four questions to the group of ACP members:

- *do you think that the work I have done has allowed the ACP to change?*
- *has the work allowed the ACP to see itself a little differently?*
- *if there has been a change, is this the change that you desired/expected?*
- *do you agree that difference, not-knowing and/or interpretation are important to doing this work?*

The first unexpected aspect of the discussion that followed was that the topic switched between a reflexive conversation about my communication design practice, and a business meeting about the ACP's website launch date and the contents and layout of the homepage. Over the course of the discussion we switched back and forth between these two subjects repeatedly. Initially I felt frustrated that some participants wished to discuss timelines and homepage images when I wanted to discuss my practice more conceptually. I then realised that the conversation had become a live example of the intertwining of practice and reflection upon practice. This was more than appropriate given my research concerns and my research methods; the theoretical concerns aired during the conversation were literally based in practice.

The second aspect of the discussion that surprised me was that the members of the ACP seemed remarkably familiar with the way I positioned practice. There was a sense in the members' remarks that, although our language was different, they already knew what I was proposing. Based on comments members made during the discussion, they found the terms I used unsurprising and the way I spoke about my practice appeared to correlate with their own experience working with me. They also remarked that the way I was framing my practice reflected understandings about their own practice as analysts.

The members of the ACP work with their clients—analysands—one on one. They remarked that the three key words I used to situate the discussion, *difference*, *not-knowing* and *interpretation*, could also be used to describe the work of analysts. They spoke about their own work being achieved through talk, *mirroring* and *transference*, saying that what was interesting was not the reflecting back of what one already has seen or knows, but the catching and reflection of what one doesn't know.

The ACP members agreed that if a design process was working well it would access knowledge that neither the client nor the designer knew. I had introduced this concept during my pre-amble explaining my provisional understanding that *not-knowing* allowed knowledge to be produced in the communication design process. Initially it surprised me that they might be sympathetic to a framing of design in this way; however I realised that this might be a connection between our different practices. One member said—in

relation to knowledge—that if an analyst became too pre-occupied with their own knowledge then it could prevent them from being able to do the work they needed to do with their client; they needed to maintain an openness to *not-knowing*. They also stated, however, that their clients needed to have the faith that the analyst did know, and that this created a tension. In order to practice analysis it was important not to ‘have the answers’ but to let those answers reveal themselves during the process of their work; new knowledge came to be revealed through practice.

My hope that ACP members would be well placed to explore the intersubjective aspects of practice—including communication design practice—was confirmed. They agreed that the work I did with them had enabled a shift in their own understanding of themselves, similar to the way their own practice incorporated intersubjective action to produce changes in their clients. One member commented that it seemed an obvious thing to say but it usually works better to get someone else to do the work for you. Here they were responding to my question about what had been achieved by having me do the work for them. In a later email one of the members expanded on this and commented that my work with the ACP has:

*opened and extended our own thinking and conceiving about our purpose, functions and relations to the fields with which we aim to be connected ... helped us to conceptualise our place not only within the field of psychoanalysis narrowly defined, but within the culture and with other fields such as those of art, philosophy, literature, and others, as well as within the history of cultural movements* (2010, pers. comm., 8 August).

At no point in my work with the ACP have I taken on the role of organisational design or given any organisational recommendations. Whatever my work has achieved has been through the process of communication design and the artefacts it has produced. While it is pleasing to receive generous comments like those above about one’s practice, what I found particularly interesting in the comment is that it speaks to shifts in the ACP’s sense of what sort of organisation it is and what sort of organisation it can *become*. This is not normally associated with the domain of the communication designer; rather it is more often taken that the work of the communication designer is to communicate what they have been told (Frascara 2004, p. 2). Frascara’s framing of communication design does not incorporate the understanding that communication design action can affect a shift in ‘thinking’ or ‘purpose’, or that it might help clients to ‘conceptualise [their] place’. I propose that the above comment by the member of the ACP directly suggests the ontological action of communication design practice.

## Understandings

Design theorist Anne-Marie Willis discusses *ontological designing*; using the term to describe an understanding that ‘we design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us’ (Willis 1999, p. 1). Willis is joint principle, along with Tony Fry, of Team D/E/S based in Queensland, Australia. D/E/S stands for ‘developing ecological sustainment’. Tony Fry, in his book *A new design philosophy : an introduction to defuturing*, defines the term *ontological designing* as ‘a shift in designing from what things are, how they function, and what they look like, to what they do’ (Fry 1999, p. 289). It is upon this ‘what they do’ that Willis extrapolates in her paper. For Willis *ontological designing* engages practitioners in an awareness of the ontological action of both the practice of designing and the designed world. When one practices *ontological designing* one does so in full awareness of—and mindfulness towards—this broader understanding of the reach of design and practices, particularly in terms of ecological sustainability (Willis 1999).

Willis’ description of ontological designing represents a paradigmatic shift in practice and the conception of practice. However my research contends that Willis’ *ontological designing* continues to align with Herbert Simon’s understanding of a designer’s action as ‘concerned with how things ought to be’ (Simon 1996, p. 4). The comparison might seem unjust since Simon’s definition and investigations of design do not include Willis’ understandings of the extensive agency of the designed artefact and the implications that understanding involves. Although Willis’ *ontological designing* understands design in a way that necessitates designers becoming aware of the interconnected on-going and far-reaching agency of design practice and designed artefacts, she continues to site the designer as the individual who is in the position, and given the power to, design as an independently-acting agent—an agent who acts on the world independently—designing the world around them.

In order to discuss the concept of *ontological designing* it is important to think about the use of the term *ontological*. A basic definition of ontology is ‘the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being’ (Oxford Online Dictionaries, 2010); and during a 2004 design research methods class I recall being given the following introduction; if epistemology equals ‘what is knowledge’ then ontology equals ‘what is’.

Fry and Willis situate much of their insightful reframing of design on the thinking of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. During the first half of the twentieth century Heidegger critiqued the traditional philosophical doctrine of ontology. He described accepted ontology as a philosophical doctrine that remained rooted in Greek thought. Heidegger’s aim in his book *Being and Time* was to ‘destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology’ (Heidegger 1962 [1931], p. 44) and reconstruct ontology anew—using his phenomenological method. He did this in order to recover the *question of being*. For Heidegger the question of being is ‘pre-ontological’ in that it comes before the traditional ancient-Greek-based doctrine of ontology. It is not possible to answer (or even ask) the question of being using traditional ontology for that ontology already

presupposes ‘what is’. By pre-ontological Heidegger means that the question of being is a question that, if we use phenomenological method to go to the ‘things themselves’, comes before traditional ontological understandings and therefore has the capacity to reconstruct our ontological understandings.

Heidegger terms the human who questions his or her own being as *Dasein*. For Heidegger his phenomenological investigation of *Dasein* ultimately shows us a way towards *Dasein*’s true authenticity. For Willis, Heidegger’s *Dasein* allows a designer to understand the true extent of their action and change their actions accordingly. In his definitions and phenomenological exploration of *Dasein* however, Heidegger and his ontology remain based in the self and, according to the French/Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, his ontology remains caught in an act of totality. Levinas’ critique of Heidegger refers to the totality of a subject-orientated understanding of the world, extending from the concept of *Dasein*, based on the ‘same’ not on *the other* (Levinas 1987 [1957], p. 54). This leads to Levinas’ claim that *the other* comes before ontology. He makes the argument that *the other*, and with *the other*, ethics, is the first philosophy, and gives rise to ontology and to further metaphysical understandings.

This chapter, *being-with: the other in dialogue*, breaks with Willis’ description of ontological designing in letting *the other* in to practice. As seen in the analysis from my previous chapter, communication design can indeed be understood as ontologically generative; as Willis suggests ‘what we design designs us’. However this research goes on to suggest that practice accesses a quite different ontologically generative capacity through *the other*. The Heideggerian *Dasein*, striving for individual authenticity, remains caught in the subject and the ‘I’, existing independently without *the other*, brought to self-hood through the being of being. In contrast Levinas understands that it is through *the other* that we are given access to the self and the ability to bring new aspects of our self into the world. In effect, communication design, as an activity undertaken with, and through, *the other*, provides the ability to transcend the ‘what is’ of the present and move into the future.

In order to find words to describe this aspect of practice—an aspect that has been revealed through this research’s projects—I refer to Levinas and his philosophical understanding of the role of *the other*. Levinas recognised that Heidegger continued to extend ontology from the authenticity of the self. For Levinas it is through *the other*, and only through *the other*, that we gain access to our selves. It is through *the other* that the subject is born and gains the ability to become the *being that questions being*, or Heidegger’s *Dasein*.

As Heidegger pointed out traditional doctrinal ontology can have the effect of removing us from *being* through its adherence to the Cartesian certainty of the subject—*cogito ergo sum*. He critiqued the Cartesian certainty of the *res cogitans*—or the ‘thinking thing’—as a continuation of ancient ontology. Heidegger’s project aimed to bring us

back to being by asking the ‘meaning of being of the *sum*’ (Heidegger 1962 [1931], p. 46), through a phenomenological investigation and restructuring of ontology extending from his concept *Dasein*. Levinas critiqued Heidegger’s *Dasein* as an existence for whom it’s own existence, its ‘place in the sun’ ‘orient[s] all signification’ (Levinas 1987 [1957], p. 52). Levinas proposes that coming before any ontology—doctrinal or Heideggerian/phenomenological—is *the other*:

*In the place of ontology—of the Heideggerian comprehension of the Being of being—is substituted as primordial the relation of a being to a being, which is none the less not equivalent to a rapport between subject and object, but rather to a proximity, to a relation with the Other* (Levinas 1990 [1963], p. 293).

For Levinas Heidegger’s comprehension of *Dasein* continues to fundamentally reside in the solipsistic state of the ‘I’. Although Heidegger challenges Descartes’s assumptions and uses phenomenological methods to investigate the meaning of the ‘I’, he continues, according to Levinas, ‘affirming a tradition in which the same dominates the other’ (Levinas 1987 [1957], p. 53). Levinas makes the claim that *the other*, and through *the other*, ethics, is the first philosophy, not, as has been accepted for over two thousand years, ontology. Through *the other* we become open to an infinitude of ‘what is.’

In the same way communication design with *the other*, as an understanding of practice, takes the designer beyond certainty and the design of the past or the present and requires practice to situate its work in the design of a radically pluralistic future.

Willis’ ‘ontological designing’ carries a moral force—given an understanding of the extensive ontological agency of his or her work as a designer, that designer will be convinced to accept a responsibility for his or her work and will work with that responsibility in mind. Levinasian ethics is not a moral code of this sort. For Levinas philosophy is ethics. It is not understanding or reason that brings us to Levinasian ethics, it is that our being is brought forth through an ethic instantiated in *the other*. It is to this Levinasian ethic that this project has led me; I am brought into my self and my being, through and with others. My work as a designer is, at its most fundamental, and its most transcendent, a bringing-into-being of others and self, simultaneously.

Willis’ paper suggests that understanding designing as *ontological designing* will bring responsibility to designers. However, she accomplishes this move through the agency of the reasoning (*res cogitans*) of an independent designer. In contrast this research suggests a Levinasian responsibility for designers, not reached through reason but, when engaged in communication design with *the other*, through *necessity*—not a project of *knowing* but a project of *being-with*.

There is no doubt that Lizzy's invitation for me to take part in the *What Makes This Poem Beautiful?* exhibition was a highly fortuitous opportunity for this research. The *client discussion project* that is based on that exhibition gave me an invaluable opportunity to discuss my research concerns and understandings with a group of long-term clients whose ability to engage in a reflective and perceptive discourse is exemplary. This opportunity was also perfectly timed as I had started to reach some of the key understandings of my research and thus I was ready to start revealing those understandings, propositionally, for feedback and substantiation. As analysts, my clients—through the *client discussion project*—helped me to reveal my own practice to myself.

In effect all of the individual research projects have helped to achieve this revealing of my practice and my self. My practice has been the foundation of this research and it is through practice-led research that I have been able to reflect on and better understand that practice. I began this research with the *visual identity project* through which I was able to investigate the intersubjective aspects of a communication design project with a new client. This allowed me to observe how *the other* led to disjunction and provocation during the design process. The *student mirror project* then demonstrated that this intersubjective disjunction and provocation had the potential to produce new knowledge. Through the *practitioner interview project* I was able to connect this disjunction and provocation, and the new knowledge it produced, to other practitioner's experiences of practice and observe the change in being, or ontological shift, enabled through the design activity with *the other*. The *client discussion project*, as I have noted above, then enabled me to discuss the understandings I had developed through the earlier project with a group of established clients. This final project allowed me to make the move from *being*, to *being-with*. From a subject-centred, designer-centred conception of practice, which fundamentally continues to address *the other* as the same, to a conception of practice in which being is revealed, and the ontological action of design is enabled, through *the other*.

I have designed the individual projects in order to understand my own practice more deeply through the practices of others—student designers, other practitioners and clients. I do not claim that through this research I now understand other practitioner's practices but that I can see the threads of my own practice reflected in the practice of *the other*. As such, *the other*—and the intersubjective negotiation enabled through *the other*—is revealed as critical, not only to my own practice but also to the successful investigation of this research and the understandings that it has produced.





## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION



In this concluding chapter I re-examine my research question in the light of what I can now state that I know. I provide an answer to that question and discuss what my answer reveals about my practice. I also discuss the implications of this research for communication design; in industry, education and research. This chapter forms the basis from which the other two parts of my doctoral submission, the presentation and exhibition, will be developed.

This research has been led in its investigation of communication design practice by the following question:

- *What roles does the other have in communication design practice and what might recognition of those roles mean for communication design practice, education and research?*

Before providing my answer it is useful to re-examine the question. Firstly, it is important to note that the question itself incorporates one of the foundational understandings of this research—that communication design practice is not solely instrumentalist. Design educator Jorge Frascara is by no means alone in defining ‘visual communication design’ as a practice of ‘broadcasting specific messages to specific sectors of the public’ (Frascara 2004, p. 2). In contrast to Frascara this research aimed to understand *the other* aspects of practice—the non-instrumentalist, complex, dynamic and human aspects—that have always drawn me to design.

The question also assumed, in its second phrase, that the ‘roles of *the other*’ in communication design practice were unrecognised, the implicit claim being that this research would recognise those roles and what they ‘meant’ and contribute this knowledge to design discourse.

Through the research projects discussed in this exegesis, I am now able to give the following answer to my research question:

- *The roles of the other are critical to communication design practice.*

Since this answer is, to some degree, already assumed in the question, what *are* the critical roles of *the other*?

- *The other’s roles in communication design practice are those of disjunction, and thereby, provocation.*

And further to this:

- *The designer, as the other, provides disjunctive provocation to the client;*
- *The client, as the other, provides disjunctive provocation to the designer;*
- *The artefact, as the other, provides disjunctive provocation to both the client and designer.*

What does this ‘disjunctive provocation’ achieve?

- *The disjunctive provocation (provided by the other in the form of designer, client or artefact) is generative.*

In what way is this disjunctive communication generative?

- *Disjunctive provocation (provided by the other in the form of designer, client or artefact) acts (in communication design) to unconceal the other in the designer and client.*

The term ‘unconceal’ is used with reference to Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological re-questioning of being (2008 [1926], p. 79), to indicate truth or *alêtheuein*, an unconcealment of being. This is not a positivistic universal truth, but a context-based, situated revealing of *Dasein*, or human *being*. Heidegger’s work in questioning traditional ontology and raising anew the question of being, has helped this research articulate its conception of the non-instrumental aspects of communication design.

Heidegger’s work, and key Heideggerian-orientated design theorists—Cameron Tonkinwise, Tony Fry, Anne-Marie Willis and Clive Dilnot—has helped enable the articulation of many of the observations and understandings that have become apparent during the research. These include the making of propositional artefacts and the action of those artefacts as discussed in Chapter Two; the role of the known and the unknown as discussed in Chapter Three; and the design-activated revealing of being as discussed in Chapter Four.

More important for this research, however has been Emmanuel Levinas. While Levinas is impressed with Heidegger’s demonstration of the ‘transitivity of understanding’ (Levinas 1998 [1951], p. 2)—a concept that underlies this research’s comprehension of knowledge—he questions Heidegger’s ‘comprehension of the being of being’ (Levinas 1990 [1963], p. 283) and makes the claim that Heidegger’s work continues ‘affirming a tradition in which the same dominates the other’ (Levinas 1987 [1957], p. 53) thus ‘subordinating the relations between beings to the structures of being’ (Levinas 1998 [1951], p. 5). He critiques Heidegger for perpetuating a paradigm in which the relation of one to another remains one of *being-as-subject* to *other-as-object*. In contrast, from a Levinasian perspective, the relation of one to another is the relation of one *being* to another *being*; subject to subject rather than subject to object. This relation to *the other*, Levinas states, is primordial; it releases us from totality, and comes before being (and ontology).

Levinas has helped me to articulate the aspects of *the other* that I have found active in communication design practice during my individual projects. This research, and my practice upon which it is based, finds in conclusion that *the other* brings disjunction to practice, and with this disjunction allows a generative capacity far in excess of a practice without *the other*. In Levinas’ words ‘it becomes possible to sustain a pluralism which is not reduced to a totality’ (Levinas 1990 [1963], p. 295).

Donald Schön’s early work has also been integral to this research. His work has given me an established framework through which I could begin to articulate this research’s nascent understandings. The table below extends directly from the one given in Schön’s *Reflective Practitioner* (1983, p. 300), in which he lists several key differences between the traditional ‘expert practitioner’ he criticises and his proposition for a ‘reflective practitioner’. Schön’s work has always been important to this research; however, although there are intimations of *the other* in his writing, he does not choose to privilege *the other* in practice. I reproduce Schön’s table below verbatim with the addition of a third column: my own brief precis on ‘reflective practice with *the other*’. My additional column begins to outline communication design and *the other* as a type of practice, and a mode of practice; in effect making a claim for the possibility of ‘a reflective practice with *the other*’.

Schön 1983		Haslem 2011
expert	reflective practitioner	reflective practice with <i>the other</i>
I am presumed to know, and must claim to do so, regardless of my own uncertainty.	I am presumed to know, but I am not the only one in the situation to have relevant and important knowledge. My uncertainties may be a source of learning for me and for them.	<i>I am presumed to know, but I know that I don't know. I have my knowledge as a practitioner but the most relevant and important knowledge is produced through intersubjective design activity with the other, in which knowledge is revealed to both practitioner and client.</i>
Keep my distance from the client, and hold onto the expert’s role. Give the client a sense of my expertise, but convey a feeling of warmth and sympathy as a ‘sweetener.’	Seek out connections to the client’s thoughts and feelings. Allow his respect for my knowledge to emerge from his discovery of it in the situation.	<i>Connect with the client, as one subject to another subject. Respect his or her knowledge as they might respect yours. Allow new knowledge to emerge through your design action together in the situation.</i>
Look for deference and status in the client’s response to my professional persona.	Look for the sense of freedom and of real connection to the client, as a consequence of no longer needing to maintain a professional facade.	<i>Be prepared to confront radical alterity in the other, know that it brings you to being, know that through the other you no longer need to maintain a totality.</i>

The design research projects conducted for this research clearly demonstrate that the aspiration to the role of 'expert' remains prevalent within the current discourse of communication design practice.

The student mirror project demonstrated how students struggled with the release of control called for in order to transform to Schön's position of 'reflective practitioner'. Student designers, encouraged by the established discourse and led by their education, continue to aspire to the role of 'expert' designer. They themselves are 'designed' through their education to envision the design situation as one in which they are required to research a comprehensible design problem, come to an understanding, and then produce an outcome in a designerly way, an outcome that 'solves the problem' and demonstrates their expertise as designers. The student mirror project denied this aspiration towards expertness. Instead, students were confronted, literally face-to-face, with the other in the form of their classmates (as 'client'). They were forced to experience the negotiation necessitated when practicing design with another human subject (rather than human as object). In this way the students were given the opportunity to not only develop as a 'reflective practitioner' but to experience 'reflective practice with the other'. Many students were not comfortable with this experience. For such nascent practitioners perhaps it is too much to ask for them to negotiate the complexities of lived practice. However this begs the question 'what is the cost if design education continues to produce budding 'experts', with no experience of the reality of the human context of practice?

Similarly, the next project, practitioner interviews, revealed that established communication design practitioners themselves continue to situate themselves within the discourse of the 'expert'. The manner in which my three chosen designers describe their projects and their relationship with their clients, demonstrates their understanding of their conception of their roles as the one who 'knows'—the untouchable individual expert, whose status is reliant upon the deference of their peers and clients towards their clear expertise in design. Yet running through all three discussions is a constant underlying refutation of the reality of these designers 'expertness'; clients repeatedly over-rule designer's actions, the very act of design reveals new aspects of the design situation, and new understandings within the client, requiring alterations in the design outcome, and so on.

Although none of the designers that were interviewed ever mentioned the role of the other as part of their practice, that role was revealed, again and again, as integral and generative in the work that they produced and the design action they enabled. None of them would have produced the work they produced without their interactions with the other and none of their clients would have been able to produce the work they did without their own interactions with the other. All the practitioners I interviewed applied design expertise within their design act, and yet expertise was not the sole quality they brought to the design situation. Their abilities to exhibit the qualities of Schön's 'reflective practitioner' were occasionally referred to but the generative role of the other

in practice remained absent from their discourse, and through this absence of direct articulation, became revealed —‘unconcealed’—as an essential aspect of practice.

The philosophy visualisation project enabled me to use visualisation techniques to understand the history behind the other and to comprehend the shift in practice enabled through a reinstatement of the role of the other in communication design practice. The continuing dominance of the Cartesian individualistic emphasis has left Western practice with the legacy of the knowing subject, or Schön’s ‘expert’. The very concept of knowledge disconnected from context is instantiated and embedded in this Cartesian world-view.

Bringing the other back into practice is risky; it brings with it a denial of the authority of expertise. As Schön recognised, dropping the ‘professional façade’ (1983, p. 300) releases the practitioner from the protection of the ‘expert’s’ untouchable knowledge. With the ‘reflective practitioner’ Schön took a huge step towards undoing the Cartesian protectionist stance of the ‘expert’ practitioner. In adding a third column to his table—in adding the other to the ‘reflective practitioner’—I aim to complete the move that Schön started and allow the context-situated and intersubjective nature of practice to regain recognition as a critical part of the professional practice of communication design.

Each of the individual research projects of this doctorate have all aided in this ‘unconcealing’ of the other in practice. My practice has provided the foundation of this research, and it is through practice-led research that I have been able to reflect on and better understand that practice. Personally, this research has allowed me to move from the uncomfortable state of inheriting an historically sanctioned subject and designer-centred conception of practice—which positions the other as the same—to a new conception of practice with the other. This new conception of the practice of communication design makes sense and resonates with my own lived experience of practice—in which being is revealed, and the ontological action of design is enabled, through the other.

I have come to this new conception—this new knowledge—through project-led research as a reflective practitioner practising communication design with the other. This research has not aimed to be a project of myself—a ‘throwing’ of my being (Heidegger 1962 [1926], p. 185)—but a project, and a relation, with the other.

The contribution of this research is a re-visioning of the practice communication design practice. The Schön/Haslem table above indicates this shift in conception but only begins to intimate the ultimate extent or application of this research. Clearly this research has major implications for practice, education and research in the field of communication design. Not only my own practice of communication design but also the practices of other practitioners, students and researchers. These implications will reveal themselves more fully as the research is disseminated and begins its contribution to communication design discourse however I can note some of those implications here.

Communication design education overwhelmingly continues to pursue the ‘expert practitioner’ model. Incorporating the ‘reflective practice with the other’ concept of practice into current design education is a major challenge and one that I hope to be able to work towards during my career as a design educator. The effects of the incorporation of this new understanding of practice are difficult to predict but I can posit a more holistically engaged, more future-aware, more context-sensitive design practitioner.

This research also provides support for the recognition of the profound role communication design has as a means of revealing (and creating) futures. This recasts communication design practice in a serious and non-instrumentalist role within our communities. This new conception of practice denies the positioning of communication design as a purely economic or communicative act—a conception that remains established in professional and academic circles. This research has the capacity to be disseminated within these communities thus shifting these established understandings, thereby having impacts on the future understandings and conceptions of communication design practice and its possible role in society.

Further to this, the research has started to make possible the revealing of a different sense of communication design action within the world. This sense is one in which design action can be seen as a generational act with which the future being of individuals and communities can come to be revealed and effected, through the practice of design, not in an instrumentalist fashion but in a subtle, pre-lingual, ontologically redefining role. This is communication design conceived as a practice that goes beyond the rationalist understanding of any one person but is instead situated in the interstices of past and future, of self and other, of knowing and unknowing—an action, and an agency that Levinas might describe as primordial. These re-conceptions start to allow a mature understanding of a practice that has the capacity to not only change the world, but to understand our place within the world and what it is to be, human.



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